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AN INQUIRY

INTO THE MORAL AND POLITICAL TENDENCY OF THE RELIGION CALLED ROMAN CATHOLIC.

Il y a des erreurs qu'il faut réfuter ſérieuſement, des abſurdités dont il faut rire, & des fauſſetés qu'il faut repouſſer avec force.

VOLTAIRE.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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C O N T E N T S.

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THE author of the following pages was led to the ſubject treated in them, by conſiderations extremely natural and obvious. When he beheld a numerous portion of fellow-ſubjects deprived of the enjoyment, not only of their religious, but alſo of their civil rights, and ſuffering every degree of diſcouragement which the impoſition of fines and excluſion from office can create, he was anxious, as might be expected, *Introduction.*

to become acquainted with the true character of this execrated people; and, with this view, was eager to examine their political and religious principles, and to trace the influence of both on their conduct, as members of ſociety. The reſult of this examination is now offered to the public, with all that reſpect which is due to its awful deciſions; but not without that confidence which either conſcious truth, or at leaſt the love of it, is wont to inſpire. The intereſts of juſtice, as well as of truth, are here equally concerned: the ſubject is therefore both important and intereſting. He who fondly believes every tale forged by calumny againſt the Papiſts, riſks the violation, not only of truth, but alſo of humanity. Cruelty is here connected with error, and prejudice with injuſtice. In other caſes, a miſtake may be committed without injury, and propagated without any pernicious conſequence; but, where the ſecurity and tranquillity of many thouſands of fellow-creatures are involved, who does not ſee that prejudice and malice, error and reſentment, are almoſt equally reprehenſible, and equally miſchievous? Truth and candour, therefore, direct all, who have any value for either, to form their judgment concerning the political and moral character of Roman Catholics, not from the partial miſrepreſentations of their avowed enemies, but from an attentive view of their genuine and undiſguiſed principles. Theſe, I am aſſured, may be known with

with far leſs difficulty than thoſe of the eſtabliſhed church. Is it not then aſtoniſhing, that any one ſhould attempt to learn the tenets of Papiſts, from the ſuſpicious information of angry polemics, when they may be viewed and reviewed in records of undoubted originality? What is this, but to prefer uncertainty to evidence, and doubt to demonſtration?

It may be, that with ſome, I ſhall incur the cenſure of immoderate preſumptuouſneſs, as well as of high irreverence towards them who have long ſince diſcuſſed the preſent ſubject; as if their diſcuſſion of it were incomplete and unſatisfactory, or as if it were reſerved for my ſagacity to find out what the acuteneſs of Chillingworth, the ingenuity of Tillotſon, or the depth of Stillingfleet, could not diſcover. For ſuch officious inferences I am not concerned; and ſhall only obſerve, that, whatever may be the merit of either of the above-named or other writers, who have gone over the ſame ground, it would be paying them a very extraordinary, and, I may add, a very unmerited compliment, to ſuppoſe them to have written on the ſubject of Popery, in ſuch a manner, that nothing more remains to be ſaid concerning it. If there be any who entertain ſo exalted a notion of theſe writers, I wiſh not to diminiſh their veneration, or their gratitude; yet I cannot help thinking, that whoever conſiders the progreſs of ſcience

and philoſophy, the abatement of religious animoſities, the general prevalence of toleration, and the happy influence of all theſe on the human character, will be inclined to believe, that, with theſe advantages, we are at this day more competent to decide on the genius of the Roman Catholic religion, than our reverend and right reverend forefathers were, above a century ago. Of late, moreover, the wall of ſeparation erected between Proteſtants and Roman Catholics, by the intolerant jealouſy of former governments, has gradually decayed and crumbled into ruin, at leaſt as far as it prevented their friendly intercourſe and ſocial connexions.

Ter ſi reſurgat murus aheneus,
Ter pereat!

No longer alarmed by the mutual dread of each other, Proteſtants and Catholics aſſociate together more freely and frequently than formerly: a circumſtance not more favourable to an acquaintance with the general character of the latter, than to that liberality of ſentiment and univerſal benevolence which diſtinguiſh the preſent age. The Papiſt is no longer that frightful object which was wont to excite the horror and deteſtation of Proteſtants. Pity has ſucceeded to averſion, and contempt to indignation; while he is now eſteemed rather abſurd than wicked, and an enemy of ſenſe and reaſon, rather than of ſociety and good neighbourhood.

bourhood. I hope, indeed, it will appear, in the courſe of this *inquiry*, that a Papiſt, as ſuch, is neither abſurd nor contemptible, nor more a foe to good ſenſe than to the conſtitution: yet, I am ſorry to ſay, this is the light in which he is viewed, if not by the beſt-informed, at leaſt by the greater part of this nation.

The vanity of enliſting under the ſtandard of popular opinion, and the dread of encountering vulgar prejudices, have too often and too powerfully influenced writers, otherwiſe well qualified to yield ſupport, and do honour to the cauſe of truth. Theſe, when engaged in ſubjects of a delicate and critical nature, are too apt to reſign their ſtrength through fear of oppoſition. They want that courage which ſhould enable them to brave the ſcorn of multitudes, and that magnanimity which looks down with contempt on ſuch as prefer an indolent acquieſcence in popular opinions, to the manly exerciſe of their own reaſon. Were I diſpoſed to ſolicit the undiſcerning favour of the multitude to theſe pages, it would be eaſy to ſecure it, by only gratifying them with aſſertions without proofs, invectives without moderation, and declamations without argument. The repetition of popiſh maſſacres and popiſh treaſons; of the cruelty of Mary, and the tyranny of James; of princes dethroned by popes, and of popes aſpiring to the dominion of the world; would be

far more acceptable and far more intereſting to many, than a calm, diſpaſſionate inquiry into the *cauſes* of the above-mentioned facts, and into their connexion with the avowed principles of Roman Catholics. The latter, however, is the purport of this pamphlet, in which, from a view of their religious and political tenets, as well as from other collateral evidences, I ſhall attempt to determine, in what light the Roman Catholics of theſe kingdoms ought to be conſidered by their Proteſtant fellow-ſubjects.

To him who undertakes to diſcuſs any of the queſtions controverted between Proteſtants and Roman Catholics, it is a moſt diſcouraging thought, that, if he ſhew any diſpoſition to moderation, or, to ſpeak more properly, if he do not diveſt himſelf of every ſentiment of moderation towards the latter, he cannot fail of drawing upon himſelf all the bitterneſs of blind zeal and illiberal prejudice. Whence ſo univerſal and ſo violent a prepoſſeſſion hath ariſen againſt a party neither conſiderable for its property, nor formidable in point of number, it is not eaſy to imagine. The ſources of private prejudice are indeed numerous and complicated, and may be traced through all the workings of jealouſy, hatred, fear, ambition, and avarice: but national prejudice is founded, generally, either in fear, or in the conflict of rival and incompatible intereſts. From the number of

Catholics

Catholics in England, nothing can be feared; and their purſuit of an intereſt oppoſite to that of the nation, appears ſtill more idle and imaginary.* What, therefore, is the cauſe of that moſt inveterate of all our national prejudices; I mean, that againſt the Papiſts; a prejudice which ſubſiſted in the reign of Elizabeth, and which, after the lapſe of two centuries, has not been extinguiſhed? Perhaps we are to look for a ſolution of this problem, not in the conſequences of a *particular fact* or event, but in a *combination of different circumſtances*, which, by their collected efficacy, have concurred to produce the effect of which we are ſpeaking.

When Henry and Edward attempted to transfer into the treaſury the riches of the ancient church, and to decorate the throne with the ſpoils of the altar, no meaſure could ſo effectually engage the

 paſſions

* I have reaſon to believe, that, from the reign of Mary till the Revolution, the body of Roman Catholics never ſought that protection, from any foreign power, which their own country denied them. From the latter period till 18 Geo. III. Roman Catholics, by refuſing the oath of allegiance, juſtified the ſuſpicion of their diſaffection to the government; though their refuſal of the oath was in conſequence of their political, not of their religious opinions. Their addreſs to the King, in 1778, ſhewed, as Mr. Burke obſerved, that they had caſt off all foreign views and connexions, and that they looked for a redreſs of grievances at the hands only of their own natural government.

paſſions of men on the ſide of Government, or reconcile them to that violence which was employed by the Court againſt the devoted Papiſts, as malicious invective, and impudent miſrepreſentation. Accordingly, no art, however baſe and diſingenuous, was omitted, which might ſerve to turn the whole tide of popular odium againſt the profeſſors of the ancient faith. Time, ever friendly to hiſtorical truth, has now unveiled that myſtery of iniquity; and we ſee, with equal aſtoniſhment and indignation, how many impoſtures and how many fictions were maliciouſly invented and induſtriouſly circulated, concerning the abuſes and ſcandals of the monaſtic orders, that theſe might appear to have drawn upon themſelves all the rigours inflicted by government. The ingenious rapacity of Cromwell and Somerſet could deviſe no more ſucceſsful method of attaining its object, than by veiling their infamous paſſion under the cover of extirpating papal tyranny and ſuperſtition. The ſame cauſes which had operated ſo much to the diſadvantage of Roman Catholics under Henry and Edward, all continued to ſink the intereſt of that party even lower, under Elizabeth. The ambition of eccleſiaſtical ſupremacy, the proſpect of great revenge againſt her moſt formidable enemy, the Pope, and the neceſſity of eſtabliſhing her title to the crown on the moſt ſolid foundations, all determined her to proſcribe a religion which ſhe had lately ſworn to protect, and to act with vigour

againſt

againſt them who profeſſed it. Indeed, from one whoſe ideas of ſincerity could allow her, after promiſing to maintain the Catholic worſhip, to denounce againſt it the moſt ſanguinary edicts; and whoſe ideas of juſtice could permit her to arraign, in judgment, an independent ſovereign; and, in contempt of the rights of hoſpitality, and of the ties of blood, to bring her to the ſcaffold;—from ſuch a character the Papiſts could not expect any ſudden change of principle, or any extraordinary effort of greater virtue in their favour. If theſe, however, were diſpoſed to indulge that malignant joy which is ſometimes felt at the view of the crimes and follies of an enemy, they might perhaps dwell with ſome pleaſure on the reflexion, that the moſt cruel of their perſecutors was the murderer of Mary, and that her miniſters were they who were her accomplices in that deed of blood.

Thus, from the firſt change of religion in this country, till the reign of James, we may obſerve, that the popular prejudice againſt Popery was connected with political cauſes, which, as they were founded on the artful and intereſted views of a party, could not afford juſt grounds for ſo univerſal a prepoſſeſſion againſt Roman Catholics.

After the rapaciouſneſs of Henry, and the two Regents under Edward, had been gratified with the laſt exhauſted remains of monaſtic wealth, and when

when the views of Elizabeth and her miniſters, in encouraging the popular cry againſt Popery, had been completely ſucceſsful, and the power of the latter was ſo far reduced as to be no longer formidable, it might have been expected that the violence of the national prejudice would have either dropped or abated: but, unfortunately, the evil which originated in Henry's avarice, and which ſubſiſted afterwards through the aid of a fraudulent and cruel policy, was now farther aggravated by the furious clamour of fanaticiſm.

The reſtleſs and uncontrolable ſpirit of Puritaniſm, ever impatient of civil as well as of eccleſiaſtical ſubjection, had borne with extreme reluctance the reſtraint which Elizabeth had laid upon it, by ſome very ſevere penal ſtatutes. The great freedom aſſumed by the Puritans, in their political ſpeculations, and in their ideas of civil liberty, could not but be particularly obnoxious to ſovereigns ſo jealous of their prerogative as were Elizabeth and James. Though new, their ſentiments were not unpopular; and, as their animoſity to Papiſts was the moſt determined and implacable, by this circumſtance they recommended themſelves, not only to the people at large, but alſo to ſome of the leading miniſters of Elizabeth, by whom they were countenanced. In the reign of James, the Puritans had gained a very viſible aſcendant in the nation; and were poſſeſſed of a very conſiderable intereſt

intereſt in the Houſe of Commons. As their views were no other than the ſubverſion of the ancient conſtitution, and of the eſtabliſhed church, in order that their operations againſt both might be at once more ſecret and ſucceſsful, they pretended their oppoſition was directed only againſt Popery. Partiality to the Papiſts, and an indifference about the progreſs of their religion, were the continual ſubjects of their complaints and remonſtrances. Neither the vigorous war of controverſy, maintained by the eſtabliſhed clergy againſt the popiſh divines, could clear the church, nor could the ſanguinary laws, ever in force, and frequently executed, by any means exempt the government, from a ſuſpicion of being favourable to that body. When we conſider the probable effects of ſo loud and unceaſing a clamour, raiſed by a numerous and powerful party againſt the Papiſts; alſo, when we reflect that the antipathy of the nation to that hated people muſt have increaſed with time, and have gained ſtrength from its long continuance, we cannot wonder if it was kept up without abatement or diminution through the reigns of the Stewarts. In the reign of Charles II. when the nation had before it the proſpect of Popery ſeated on the throne, its terrors, we may imagine, were extreme. What Cecil had been in the days of Elizabeth, that now was the Earl of Shaftesbury. Conſpiracies and maſſacres were again forged and believed. The fire of London, the diſgrace at Chatham, with every

public

public diſaſter, all were laid to the account of the devoted Papiſts. In ſhort, James II. aſcended the throne; and inheriting all the exalted notions of his Father and Grandfather, concerning the unlimited prerogative of kingly power, he deſerved to loſe at once the confidence and allegiance of his ſubjects. If only the perſonal character of that Prince had ſuffered from the arbitrary and impolitic meaſures of his government, all had been well: but, by a ſophiſtry which attends all the paſſions, eſpecially thoſe into which the populace enter, it was diſcovered that his religion had made him a tyrant, and a ſubverter of the conſtitution. At a time when Newton and Locke were buſy in diſſipating antiquated errors and prejudices, the people of this nation were ſo far the dupes of both, as to believe a Papiſt only could be guilty of attempting what every Proteſtant Prince, ſince the reformation, had either executed or aimed at; I mean, to raiſe prerogative on the ruins of liberty. This however is not a place to refute, either by argument or ridicule, that higheſt extravagance, that abſurdeſt inſtance of the vulgar prejudice againſt Popery: only let it be remembered, that, if James II. violated the conſtitution, he wanted not the precedent of his Proteſtant predeceſſors; and that, among the obligations which Popery may impoſe on a King of Great-Britain, it will never be one, that he ſhall ſacrifice the peace and liberty of his people to a miſguided zeal for his own religion.

If

If we now take a retroſpect of the different cauſes which have at different periods contributed to prepoſſeſs the nation againſt Papiſts, it will be impoſſible not to obſerve that this prepoſſeſſion is founded on no juſt and ſufficient motive; but that, as it began from the luſt of eccleſiaſtical power and eccleſiaſtical plunder, ſo it was propagated by miniſterial intrigue, and continued by the dark inſidious policy of a fanatical party. And if to theſe cauſes we add the abſurd error and injuſtice of attributing to the influence of his religious perſuaſion the unconſtitutional conduct of James II. I ſincerely believe, we ſhall have diſcovered the true and real grounds of that general antipathy to Popery, which has ſubſiſted from the firſt change of religion in this Iſland, down to the preſent time. It may indeed, and probably will, be ſaid, that however ſuſceptible the minds of individuals may be of prejudice, yet whole nations are not haſtily to be charged with it; and therefore that the ſettled animoſity of this country againſt Popery is rather a proof of guilt in the Papiſts, than an inſtance of groundleſs prejudice in the Engliſh nation. It is indeed evident, that individuals are more likely to be prejudiced than a great and enlightened people; yet neither our own reaſon, nor the hiſtory of mankind, will, I believe, allow us to maintain that the latter is incapable of receiving impreſſions founded on prejudice. Now, whether to attribute the popular odium againſt Papiſts to

prejudice

prejudice, after the foregoing account of its origin and progreſs, be a *haſty* accuſation, is what is ſubmitted to the judgment of the unbiaſſed reader. That account, it cannot be denied, has been given from inconteſtable facts of hiſtory. And, if to the above obſervations be added an inquiry into the nature and ſpirit of the religion profeſſed by Roman Catholics, it will, I think, appear ſufficiently evident, that prejudice, more than truth, has determined us to form an opinion ſo unfavourable concerning that body. Juſtice, as well as humanity, forbids us to condemn the perſons, and execrate the principles of our fellow-ſubjects, without knowing the character of the former, or the tendency of the latter. What therefore is the point of view in which the Roman Catholic religion is to be conſidered; and what are the ſources from which information may be derived, that a true judgment may be formed of its genuine character?

He who enters on this inquiry muſt, for information, conſult the writings and belief of Roman Catholics; and, having aſcertained their doctrines, muſt then obſerve, whether theſe bear a favourable or unfavourable aſpect to morality and government. Morality is the foundation of human ſociety; and political greatneſs, to be permanent, muſt be raiſed on the baſis of public virtue. If therefore the religion of Papiſts be found to be contradictory,

contradictory, either directly or in its conſequences, to any moral principle, it is ſufficient to juſtify every legal diſcouragement employed againſt it; but if it appear to be equally favourable with other perſuaſions, and equally friendly to good morals, then may it claim an equal degree of favour and countenance from the magiſtrate. Roman Catholics, being profeſſors of Chriſtianity, cannot, conſiſtently with this profeſſion, avow any other moral doctrines than ſuch as are founded on natural and revealed religion. The Scripture they receive as the word of God; and the law of nature they believe to be a rule of action unalterable and indiſpenſable. Conſcience alſo, the great interpreter of the natural law, they admit as a rule by which we are to judge of the good or bad quality of our actions. In ſhort, if their public profeſſion, or public practice, be allowed to have any weight, I know no principle *merely moral*, in which they do not agree with the eſtabliſhed church of England. It is not however to be denied, that the common principles of morality may be ſo far weakened and deformed by the doctrines of a pretended revelation, as in a great meaſure to render them void of all efficacy and influence on the mind. The point therefore to be examined ſeems preciſely this: "Are there not "certain religious practices obſerved by Roman "Catholics, and alſo certain dogmas believed by "them, which, though they are pretended to be "conformable either to a written or traditional re-

"velation,

" velation, are juſtly ſuſpected of an immoral " tendency?" This I conceive to be an accurate ſtatement of the queſtion concerning thoſe immoral doctrines and practices with which the Papiſts have been reproached, both by politicians and polemics, during the laſt two hundred years. The charge is denied. Let us now ſee how it is refuted.

Repentance. Among the various points of Roman Catholic belief, none ſeems to be, in a moral view, more important than the doctrine of *repentance*. Whether we conſider with the eye of reaſon and philoſophy the melancholy conſequences of guilt in this life, its oppoſition to the laws, its dread of the penal ſanctions of thoſe laws, its external infamy and inward remorſes; or whether, by the light of religion, we contemplate its more terrible effects relatively to a future ſtate; that cannot but be a moſt intereſting doctrine, by which men are taught how they may avoid theſe evils, and how they may regain the loſt favour of their Creator. That repentance is the general condition on which theſe benefits may be obtained, is affirmed by all Chriſtians with great unanimity; but in explaining the nature and extent of this condition, they fall into their uſual diſcordancy. The church of England, with many other reformed churches, requires from the repenting ſinner, that he be ſorry for his paſt tranſgreſſions, that he renounce his evil ways, and that he conceive a firm reſolution of future amend-

ment.

ment. All this the Church of Rome alſo requires, and even more: ſhe enjoins a verbal declaration of all his ſins to be made to one of her miniſters; nor does ſhe then encourage him to hope for pardon, till he appear willing to expiate them by a voluntary ſufferance of penitential auſterities.

Notwithſtanding this greater appearance of rigour in the Romiſh diſcipline of penance, I know not how it has been univerſally believed by Proteſtants, that the tenets of the Roman Catholics, concerning the terms of acceptance, are of ſo accommodating and indulgent a nature, as to yield no ſmall degree of encouragement to vice. "In "other articles, it has been ſaid, the doctrines of "Popery are harmleſsly abſurd, calculated to "ſhock the underſtanding, rather than pervert "the heart: but relatively to this, it is otherwiſe. "In effect, whatever tends to mitigate the ſalutary "terrors of heavenly juſtice, to abate the awful-"neſs of its threatening denunciations, or to flatter "vice with a proſpect of pardon approaching to "impunity, cannot but be favourable to immo-"rality. The villain who is guilty of injuſtice "and murder, may, by counterfeiting ſorrow, and "accuſing himſelf of his ſins to a prieſt, after a "ſhort interview, be pronounced free from the "bonds of iniquity, and reſtored to the favour of "Heaven. Now, to what end does Religion de-"nounce vengeance againſt the libertine and the

" profligate, if, at the ſame time, ſhe counteract
" the impreſſions of fear, by an aſſurance of recon-
" ciliation on ſuch eaſy terms?—Surely the dread
" of her menaces will be very feebly impreſſed on
" the minds of thoſe who believe that, by confeſſ-
" ing themſelves ſinners, they ſhall eſcape puniſh-
" ment. The Popiſh doctrine of repentance, there-
" fore, is highly pernicious, on account of its in-
" direct tendency to relax the morals of men, by
" flattering them with the promiſe of eaſy forgive-
" neſs. Nor is this all:—the very practice itſelf,
" of *confeſſion*, conſidered as to its immediate and
" moſt obvious effects, is ſuch as will alarm the
" principles of every moral and conſcientious
" man. In this ſacred tribunal, as it is called,
" the moſt abominable and moſt infamous of the
" paſſions is inflamed by opportunity, and en-
" couraged by ſecrecy. Here every religious and
" moral reſtraint may be broken through, by thoſe
" who are alike ſecure from the bluſh of modeſty
" and the confuſion of diſcovery. In theſe pious
" colloquies, where every ſubject of poſſible cri-
" minality is diſcuſſed between the parties with all
" the accuracy of minute detail, how can delicacy
" or purity of manners be preſerved, while the
" memory is employed to recollect, the imagina-
" tion to paint, and the tongue to relate, the moſt
" humiliating weakneſſes of our nature?"

Not-

Notwithſtanding all this impaſſioned declamation, the effect of prejudice, as often as of conviction, to me it has always appeared ſurpriſing, that the Roman Catholic doctrine of repentance ſhould be thought, by any who are acquainted with it, too relaxed, or in the ſmalleſt degree formidable to the intereſts of morality. The arguments of polemics are commonly plauſible; but here we are ſhocked by glaring improbability. With as much truth it might be affirmed of the Engliſh conſtitution, that it is unfavourable to political liberty. Indeed it may be, and has been ſaid of the latter, that it encourages oppoſition to government, affords protection to licentiouſneſs, and confines within too narrow limits the power of the ſovereign. But, that it is hoſtile to liberty, who will dare to ſay? Alſo that, in their notions of penance, Roman Catholics are rigorous without reaſon, and cruel without neceſſity; in ſhort, that they are the dupes of a barbarous, unrelenting ſuperſtition; all this has been ſaid a thouſand times; and to prove it, both the practices of many, and the common doctrines of all Roman Catholics, have been brought forward: but that they are too looſe and too indulgent in the doctrine of penance, is a calumny which only malice could affirm, and only ignorance believe. For my part, the character of the penitential diſcipline now in force among Roman Catholics, ſeems to me to be rigour and ſeverity, rather than laxity or indulgence. When

the ſinner thinks of returning to the path of duty and obedience to his Maker, and for that purpoſe reſolves to do penance for paſt tranſgreſſions, he is taught, not to counterfeit ſorrow; but, by weighing the motives that induce him to a love of God, and a deteſtation of his former conduct, to conceive an unfeigned and heart-felt ſorrow for paſt offences, and a reſolution of amending his future life. After recollecting his ſins in the bitterneſs of his ſoul, he is admoniſhed to make a verbal declaration of them to the miniſters of the church, and to await their ſentence; thus ſubmitting to an inſtitution of the moſt humiliating nature; an inſtitution which confounds the pride, and affronts the ſhame of every individual, from the prince and the pontif, down to the laſt and loweſt member of the Catholic church. That ſuch are the regulations with regard to all penitents, without diſtinction, in the Church of Rome, is evident from every authority that can be deſired by the moſt ſuſpicious or the moſt incredulous. In what, therefore, conſiſts the encouragement which it is pretended the Romiſh doctrine of repentance affords to vice? Is it that, beſides faith in Chriſt, beſides ſorrow for ſin, and a reſolution of reforming his future life, which the Catholic requires in common with the eſtabliſhed church, he alſo exacts from himſelf, a diſpoſition to ſubmit to the afflictions of Providence, and alſo to the auſterities enjoined by his profeſſion, with a view to atone for paſt irregularities? But it is idle

to

to attempt any further compariſon. When men begin to be truly afraid of a religion too eaſy and too complaiſant, it will, I believe, be determined without much difficulty, whether the Romiſh or eſtabliſhed religion be moſt indulgent.

With regard to the danger ſuppoſed to ariſe from the ſecrecy of confeſſion, it ſeems totally imaginary. To believe that ſecrecy is always connected with crime; that the opportunity, when offered, of doing wrong, is always eagerly ſeized; and that Papiſts are ever ready to ruſh into wickedneſs, when they are unnoticed by the public eye; is the effect of ſomething worſe than illiberal prejudice:—it is downright miſanthropy. The prieſt and penitent meet together on buſineſs of a moſt ſerious and weighty nature; the one being about to receive, the other to adminiſter, a rite, which both are taught to believe is of divine inſtitution. Now, impreſſed with theſe awful ſentiments, can they be conceived to have any other view, than of complying with an ordinance deſigned by its author to make them both better men, and better Chriſtians. Surely, when ſuch are the ideas in general of confeſſion, and ſuch in general the views of them that make uſe of it, he who can ſuſpect any evil conſequence from this practice, muſt be under the influence of motives not the moſt honourable to human nature.

If it be alleged that the ſelf-accuſation of the criminal in this tribunal, tends to deprave the minds of men, by rendering them callous to ſhame, and to that apprehenſion of diſgrace from diſcovery, which is ſo great a reſtraint on vicious actions, and, conſequently, that it occaſions an inſenſibility not only to the impreſſions of ſhame, but alſo to the horror of vice itſelf—I anſwer, that if indeed confeſſion of ſins were allowed to be made in ſuch a manner as to reſemble a bare narration of facts, or an unintereſting detail of tranſgreſſions, unaccompanied with any ſigns of preſent ſorrow, or purpoſes of future amendment; then might it be feared, leſt this humiliating ceremony might ſo far familiariſe men with guilt, as to diveſt them of all ſentiment of ſhame or remorſe. But when it is conſidered that the confeſſion of a ſinner is, or ought always to be, made with a ſenſe of ſorrow and of ſhame for the offences he has committed, and that he is taught on no other terms to expect the benefit of the ſacrament, ſurely every ſcruple of the moſt exact moraliſt muſt be quieted by theſe conſiderations.

Whether the Romiſh practice of confeſſion be of divine appointment, or of human inſtitution; alſo, whether this practice and the neceſſity of it, were known to antiquity; are inquiries foreign to the deſign of theſe pages: upon which, as well as upon other topics of controverſy, I doubt not but

the polemics of the two laſt centuries have alleged every thing which acute reaſoning, joined to extenſive erudition, could ſuggeſt to prove the conformity or oppoſition of the Romiſh diſcipline to the doctrine of Revelation. From theſe diſquiſitions I wholly abſtract, only ſolicitous to inquire, on the principles of impartial reaſon and common ſenſe, into the moral or immoral tendency of the practice of confeſſion. To him who allows the matter a moment's conſideration, it will appear that, by diſcloſing to a miniſter of religion the ſtate of his conſcience, a man may obtain, with ſingular advantage, every aid which that religion affords, either to impreſs him more forcibly with the hopes and fears of another world, to adminiſter comfort to him in diſtreſs, or to inculcate and explain to him, in their full extent, his particular and perſonal duties. Confeſſion is a kind of private inſtruction in which the prieſt does not, as in the pulpit, dwell upon general topics of cenſure or exhortation; but, adapting his advice to the individual capacity and circumſtances of his penitent, he diſcovers to him the ſources of his irregularities, and preſcribes to him proper remedies againſt them; and, while he endeavours to correct the depravity of his heart, he enlightens the underſtanding with the knowledge of thoſe duties which concern him both as a citizen and a Chriſtian: for, in the Romiſh church, it may be obſerved, no one is admitted to a participation of the ſacraments, who

is not well inſtructed in the principal myſteries of chriſtian belief, and in the obligations of chriſtian morality. Hence it appears, that confeſſion greatly facilitates the acquirement of religious inſtruction, and may therefore be ſaid to promote all thoſe beneficial effects which flow from it. And this advantage of the practice, I think, far outweighs the evils pretended to ariſe from it; evils that ſubſiſt more in imagination than in reality, and that are the effects of wild and malignant conjecture, rather than of juſt obſervation or experience.

Theſe remarks in favour of confeſſion, will not be attributed to any undue partiality to Popery, by thoſe who know that many truly orthodox ſons of the Church of England have expreſſed themſelves on the ſubject at leaſt with moderation, if not with approbation of the practice. I recollect the names of ſeveral prelates of the eſtabliſhed church, of whom ſome have lamented the diſuſe, others have deſired the re-eſtabliſhment of confeſſion. A learned Prelate* and diſtinguiſhed preacher, on the preſent bench,

* This Prelate, eager to ſignalize his proweſs in the field of controverſy, publiſhed, in 1782, the ſubſtance of Archbiſhop Secker's five ſermons againſt Popery. His Lordſhip's courage and conduct on this occaſion, remind us of one of Homer's heroes, who directed his attack on the Trojans, "ſecure behind the Telamonian ſhield:"

Ἄνταρ ὁ Αἴαντ' ἰὼν, πᾶις ὡς ἰσὸ μήλοισι λέοντι,
Εἰς Αἴαντ'· ὁ δέ μιν σάκεϊ κρύπτασκε φαεινῷ.

ILIAD, θ. v. 271, 2.

bench, whoſe writings diſcover more eloquence than liberality of ſentiment, grants, though with apparent reluctance, that in many caſes a confeſſions of ſins to the miniſter may be uſeful, and ſometimes neceſſary. Alſo many foreign divines of the Reformation, have entertained ſentiments not leſs favourable concerning this point of Catholic diſcipline. From theſe conceſſions of his adverſaries, conceſſions extorted by evidence, not yielded through complaiſance, a Roman Catholic will be juſtified in deducing at leaſt this concluſion, that the practice of confeſſion, whatever be ſaid of its origin or neceſſity, is contrary to no principle of moral duty. With what ſhadow of reaſon therefore, has the reproach of immoral laxity been fixed on the Popiſh ſyſtem? or whence could a repreſentation ſo unjuſt of its doctrine of repentance originate? Was it that the authors of it ſuffered themſelves to be miſled by the mere ſound, without comprehending the meaning of a Popiſh INDULGENCE? or that, by a fineſſe not uncommon in controverſy, they availed themſelves of the ambiguity of a theological term, to miſſtate the belief of thoſe by whom it was uſed? This leads us naturally to a diſcuſſion of the Romiſh doctrine of *indulgences*.

On no other occaſion has the clamour againſt the ſuperſtitions of Popery been either louder or more frequent than on this ſubject. It would ſeem,

ſeem, that the adverſaries of that perſuaſion, conceiving this to be the moſt vulnerable part of the popiſh ſyſtem, have directed againſt it the whole force of their oppoſition. And indeed it muſt be confeſſed, that, of all the abuſes which, during an eſtabliſhment of many centuries, it was impoſſible ſhould not have crept into the Church of Rome, as well as into any other ſociety equally ancient and diffuſive, thoſe which were committed on occaſion of indulgences were the moſt enormous. Inſtigated by avarice, the baſeſt of the paſſions, and unawed by a ſenſe of decorum, the *pardoners* bluſhed not to practiſe the moſt undiſguiſed ſimony, to commit acts of the moſt barefaced and violent rapacity, and to offer the moſt daring inſults to ſociety and religion. Anxious only to enrich themſelves, they were little ſcrupulous about the means; and too often made indulgences a mere pretext for defrauding the unſuſpicious and induſtrious. The acts of almoſt every Council, both general and particular, for two hundred years before the Reformation, abound with complaints of the pious frauds with which theſe impoſtors continually abuſed the unguarded ſimplicity and ignorance of the people: and it is to me aſtoniſhing, that the meaſure adopted by the Council of Trent, of an entire ſuppreſſion of them, ſhould not have occurred long before, as the only effectual method of ſilencing the loud cry of the public againſt ſuch flagrant enormities. But on this occaſion we may

may obſerve the general defect of religious eſtabliſhments. When thoſe abuſes have once crept into them, which will inevitably attend every government and every inſtitution adminiſtered by men, the want of that quick diſcernment of faults, which is oftener found in enemies than in friends, prevents many diſorders from being rectified, many abuſes from being reformed, and many ſpirited, yet ſalutary, meaſures from being carried into execution. On the other hand, the dread of cenſure from thoſe who are known to be intereſted in finding matter for it, has been frequently preventive of crimes and follies, which would have been rather countenanced than diſcouraged by the unalarmed ſecurity and undiſturbed repoſe of an *eſtabliſhment*. But to return to indulgences; it is allowed that the venality and proſtitution of them had become ſo notoriouſly infamous, that at laſt the clamour of both clergy and laity was unanimous againſt the authors. But what then? Is it only indulgences that have been abuſed? or muſt the declaimers againſt popery be gratified with an exception from the uſual rules of reaſoning, and be permitted, from the accidental abuſe of indulgences, to infer their abſolute impropriety and evil tendency? Small indeed muſt be our experience in life, and very ſlender our knowledge of mankind, if from them we have not learnt, that all men, of every denomination, are alike ſuſceptible of the love of money. The ſacred writings

inform

inform us, that in the family of Samuel, a moſt holy prophet, and even in the number of the twelve Apoſtles, avarice had its votaries; and yet we are to wonder how a body of men, who were, it may be preſumed, neither prophets nor apoſtles, could be guilty of avarice and rapaciouſneſs! It is however but juſtice to obſerve, though I know none of our writers againſt the Papiſts who have had the candour to acknowledge it, that Roman Catholics have been as loud in condemning the conduct of the *pardoners*, as either the zealous Jortin, the declamatory Robertſon, or the truly orthodox Porteus. What pretenſions theſe authors have to the praiſe of candour, they have ſhewn by their careful omiſſion of the above remark, though ſo obvious to one who was diſpoſed to do juſtice to Roman Catholics; and alſo by their affecting to confound the unauthoriſed proceedings of the *pardoners*, with the general and confirmed uſages of the Catholic body.

But it may be alleged, that the objections of Proteſtants againſt indulgences, are drawn, not only from the ſcandalous behaviour of the *pardoners*, but alſo from the very nature of indulgences themſelves. What, therefore, is meant by an *indulgence*; a term which has for theſe two centuries drawn upon the Romiſh Church ſuch accumulated reproach, and which, during that period, has excited her adverſaries to employ againſt her all the violence

violence of invective, and all the poignancy of ridicule? In the writings of these controversial declaimers, nothing appears to me more surprising, than that, to procure information on the subject of indulgences, they have rather had recourse to writers of their own, than of the Romish communion *. Certainly such conduct affords no very favourable idea of their candour, or even of their judgment: for if the popish doctrine of indulgences must be held out to the public as a work of blind superstition and priestly policy, and as an encouragement to immorality, surely the doctrine itself ought to be stated from works containing the avowed and genuine dogmas of Popery: but this has not been done. The most favourable notion of an *indulgence*, to be found in Anti-papist writers, is, that it is "a forgiveness of sin, in consideration "of the recital of certain prayers, the performance "of alms-deeds, fasts, or other good works." But because it seemed not very repugnant to Scripture and antiquity, that the pardon of sins should be obtained by these means, the nature of an indulgence was to undergo a farther alteration, more fitted to raise a frown or smile alternately, at the expence of the poor Papist. For this end it was to be represented as "a grant of pardon, for a "certain

* "Il faudroit être bien simple pour croire qu'il suffit d'en-"tendre les docteurs de son parti, pour s'instruire des raisons "du parti contraire." ROUSSEAU.

" certain ſum, of ſins unrepented of." In effect, this is the idea of an indulgence, which, however diſtorted and diſfigured, has, with uniform malice and diſingenuity, been handed from Luther down to his modern panegyriſt Dr. Robertſon. A Proteſtant, I doubt not, will recognize the figure, with all its diſtortions; but no Catholic, I will venture to ſay, will allow it to have the fainteſt ſhade of likeneſs to the indulgence of which he has heard. That an indulgence ſhould procure him the pardon of his ſins, will be more than he has learnt before; that it is a commodity purchaſable for a ſum of money, will appear ſtill more extraordinary; but that the benefit of an indulgence extends to unrepented crimes, is a paradox which will excite his pity or indignation: he will ſpurn away the calumny with becoming contempt, and, in the exaſperated language of Ajax, will ſay of its author,

——*Sic* pugnat! *Sic* eſt metuendus Ulyſſes!

Still ſhould the queſtion be urged, " What is " meant by an indulgence?" I anſwer, that Catholics themſelves are the moſt competent to fix the ſenſe of a term, which they were the firſt to uſe. If a doubt ariſe concerning the doctrines of the firſt reformers, it is not their adverſaries whom we conſult, but the writings of the reformers themſelves, and their followers. To the above query then, were it propoſed, I believe a Roman Catho-

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lic would anſwer, that he underſtands by an indulgence* "a remiſſion of that temporal puniſhment "to which he conceives the ſinner is ſubject, after "his reconciliation with God, and after that the "guilt of his ſins hath been pardoned through "repentance." An indulgence, therefore, ſuppoſes the diſtinction of a twofold puniſhment, temporal and eternal, incurred by ſin; a diſtinction ſo eſſential in the Romiſh theology, that without it, neither the doctrines of purgatory, indulgences, nor of repentance, can be underſtood. Hence the only method of refuting the popiſh tenets above mentioned, is to ſhew, if it can be ſhewn, the vanity of this diſtinction. Petulant wit, and vehement declamation, when pointed at the pretended conſequences of indulgences, may afford entertainment to the vulgar, to whom they are addreſſed, but will be received only with contempt by all who are competent judges of the argument.

But it is the moral and political aſpect, and not the orthodox complexion of indulgences, which is here

* This repreſentation of an indulgence is, I am ſenſible, the leaſt favourable to Roman Catholics. None of that perſuaſion are obliged to believe the effect of an indulgence extends beyond the preſent life, or that it operates any farther than as a mitigation, upon juſt cauſes, of canonical penances, enjoined by the paſtors of the church to penitent ſinners, according to their ſeveral degrees of demerit. See a very accurate ſtatement of *Roman Catholic principles*, publiſhed in the Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. LVII. Jan. Feb. March.

here to be examined. An acute and ingenious writer has affirmed, that Proteſtants have no reaſon to apprehend the diſſolution of morality or ſociety from a popiſh indulgence*. The ſame author alſo obſerves, that the firſt reformers did as much injury to morality, by entirely aboliſhing purgatory, as the pardoners ever did by the ſale of indulgences. Indeed if Popery be thought to encourage vice, by promiſing to the ſinner an eaſy pardon of future puniſhment, does not Proteſtantiſm equally countenance guilt, by denying the reality of that puniſhment, and by calling the popiſh doctrine of purgatory † "a vain thing, and "fondly invented?" Should it be ſaid, that the Proteſtant cannot but have the fear of God before his eyes, while he believes the exiſtence of puniſhments both more terrible and more certain than thoſe of a fabulous purgatory; I anſwer, that Roman Catholics alſo believe with equal firmneſs, and perhaps with greater unanimity, ‡ that there is a hell,

* Hume's Hiſtory, Vol. IV. Note A.

† Art. 22.

‡ Monſ. D'Alembert affirmed, in the article *Geneva*, which he furniſhed for the Encyclopédie, that many of the Genevan divines did not believe a hell. The divines denied the charge: but the philoſopher, inſtead of retracting, confirmed the accuſation by a bold appeal to their writings and converſation, and alſo to the general perſuaſion of the people of Geneva. He adds, that a diſbelief of this alarming article of Chriſtianity is a neceſſary

a hell, as well as a purgatory, and that no indulgence whatever can avail the ſpirits confined in that place of woe. How far the exiſtence of purgatory is fabulous, and how far the doctrine of indulgences, built, as it is, upon the former, may be thought to lay a groundleſs and unneceſſary reſtraint on the conſciences of men, by threatening them with the imaginary terrors of an *intermediate ſtate*, are inquiries in which I have no buſineſs, nor yet any inclination, to engage; and I dare ſay that the omiſſion will be as much to the ſatisfaction of the reader as of myſelf. This however I ſhall obſerve, that the belief of purgatory, and of the uſe of indulgences, whatever be thought of its foundation in revelation, is perfectly harmleſs and inoffenſive with regard to morality. Indeed, that theſe opinions ſhould by the philoſopher be ranked among ſuperſtitions, and that by the divine, I mean of our own country, they ſhould be numbered with the corruptions of Popery, might be expected; but to repreſent them as hoſtile to virtue, and dangerous to ſociety, would be ridiculous, were not the ridicule loſt in injuſtice and defamation.

a neceſſary conſequence of Proteſtant principles; and that it will ſooner or later be avowed and taught in all churches of the Reformation. What truth there is in this prediction of the French philoſopher, perhaps the divines of our own country can inform us. See Vol. VII. Encyclopédie, Art. *Geneva*, and Let. de Monſ. D'Alembert à J. J. Rouſſeau, Vol. VI. Oeuvres de Rouſſeau, ed. 4to. p. 441.

Many writers on the continent, of acknowledged ingenuity and ſagacity, have employed all their art to render the religion of the people at once odious and ridiculous; yet I recollect not one who has diſcovered in indulgences that immoral tendency, which has alarmed the apprehenſions of our countrymen.

But notwithſtanding theſe apprehenſions, which have ariſen from a view of the abuſes rather than from a juſt notion of indulgences, I doubt not but to the candid and impartial it will readily occur, that few bleſſings, even the moſt valuable, have been enjoyed by men without having been abuſed. The abuſe of a revelation has produced much evil; the abuſe of kingly power cauſed the deſpotiſm of the Tudors, and all the calamities of the grand rebellion; and even that boaſt of Engliſhmen, the liberty of the preſs, has, through abuſe, degenerated into ſuch licentiouſneſs, that it is with many a problem ſtill unreſolved, whether it be more beneficial or prejudicial to the community. To ſhew therefore the bad effects of indulgences, relatively to public morals, it muſt be proved that they have a neceſſary tendency to promote vice, independently of all abuſes. Such a tendency in them, Mr. Hume could not diſcover; and that Gentleman no one will ſuſpect to have been influenced by a predilection for Popery *.

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* The late author of *The Confeſſional*, utterly averſe, as he was, to Popery, was not able to ſee thoſe frightful conſequences which

If we conſult experience as well as reaſon on this head, we ſhall find that they who believe in the doctrine of indulgences are by no means behind their opponents in point of morality. It may indeed be an invidious as well as a hazardous undertaking, to adjuſt national pretenſions to moral virtue: yet, I believe, that man will have nothing to apprehend from the charge of either partiality or preſumption, who ventures to aſſert, that the morals of Roman Catholics are not worſe than thoſe of Proteſtants.

Idolatry and Superſtition.

During the firſt phrenzy of the Reformation, while the violence of party was extreme, and the bitterneſs of religious animoſity unabated, the reformers, as if it were in revenge for the opprobrious appellation of *heretics*, retorted on Papiſts the charge of idolatry, and declared the Head of Roman Catholic idolaters to be Antichriſt *. This accuſation, notwithſtanding

which ſo many of his brethren have apprehended from the Romiſh doctrine and diſcipline of penance. "I will not "examine her [Papal Rome] on the head of purgatory, "penances, &c. which have no immediate ill effect on civil "ſociety." Ed. 3. p. xcix.

* It is painful to reflect, that one of the politeſt ſcholars in this country ſhould have attempted to revive the credit of this fanatical notion; an attempt which may be compared, for ſucceſs as well as deſign, with that of Sir Iſaac Newton to interpret

withſtanding the confidence with which it was urged at firſt, and the perſeverance with which it was continued at different intervals, now ſeems to have dropped in great meaſure, and to have had the ſame end with every attack equally unfounded and un-

terpret the *Revelations*. See Dr. Hurd *on the Prophecies of the Chriſtian Church*.

A learned Prelate and Profeſſor at Cambridge affirms it to be "a primary pillar of the reformed faith, that the hierarchy "of the Church of Rome is the Antichriſt of St. John." It muſt be owned, that the charge of Antichriſtianiſm againſt the head of the Romiſh Church, has afforded no inconſiderable ſupport to the cauſe of the reformed. This may be attributed, not ſo much to the evidence of the poſition, which affirms the Pope to be Antichriſt, as to the fanaticiſm of that party which firſt aſſented to it. When the minds of men are violently agitated by the intereſt they take in an important event, they believe without heſitation the moſt extravagant fictions, and embrace without remorſe the moſt iniquitous meaſures. Evidence is not required; indeed, were it offered, diſtracted with the great views of party, men are then incapable of attending to it. This is the favourable moment for deſign and impoſture. Then may the tale of abſurdity be unfolded, when reaſon is ſet at defiance, and credulity is ſuffered to take poſſeſſion of every mind. Such has been the ſtate of the human mind in all violent revolutions of either church or ſtate. Who then can wonder that, by the aid of ſuch circumſtances, by the miſapplication of ſcripture texts, and the miſinterpretation of ſcripture prophecies, Proteſtants were led to believe, that the head of Roman Catholics was the *little horn* of Daniel, the *man of ſin* of St. Paul, and the *Antichriſt* of St. John?

The learned Profeſſor alſo gravely informs us, that "he "has known the infidelity of more than one young man,

"happily

unſupported. Indeed, * the Book of Homilies, and 30 Ch. II.† ſtill expreſs the language of antiquated prejudice; and ſtill are ſuffered, doubtleſs to the honour of the pulpit and the bar, to miſlead the ignorant and uninformed: yet theſe, like the ruins of our ancient abbies, are monuments of the paſt, rather than of the preſent belief. A *pious* foundation of the late Biſhop of Glouceſter has, within the laſt twenty years, called forth new ſup-

 porters

" happily removed by ſhewing him the characters of Popery " delineated by St. Paul in his prophecy concerning the man " of ſin." At the commencement, and during the progreſs of the Rebellion, the clergy, by miſapplying obſcure texts of ſcripture, inflamed the paſſions of an enthuſiaſtic audience againſt the King and Royaliſts: yet, does it follow that ſcripture was in reality on the ſide of the rebels? The happy impreſſion, therefore, which his Lordſhip wrought on his young converts, by ſhewing them the characters of Popery delineated by St. Paul, is no proof that his Lordſhip's interpretation of the prophecy was juſt, or that the prediction of St. Paul was really fulfilled in the perſon of the Biſhop of Rome. I wonder not, that more than one young man ſhould have yielded to a bad argument. Some men require more, ſome leſs, evidence of the truth they are ſolicited to embrace; others, of a more pliant and unſettled creed, require no evidence whatever. It is for his Lordſhip to determine in which of theſe predicaments his converts are to be claſſed. For the honour however of Cambridge, I hope her Divinity Profeſſor is maſter of better arguments againſt infidelity than that which he has produced above.—See Collection of Theological Tracts, Vol. V. p. 7.

* Homily the ſecond, *on peril of idolatry.*

† 30 Ch. II. c. 1.

porters of the charge of Romiſh antichriſtianiſm and idolatry. Theſe have been hired to illuſtrate, with their venal eloquence, arguments borrowed from the fiery Whitaker, and the viſionary Mede. The Biſhop's money has procured preachers; but it has not ſupplied any new powers of argument, or reflected any new light on a ſubject of infinite obſcurity. The names of Biſhop Montague, Biſhop Parker, of Thorndike, and, above all, of Grotius, will bear a great load of lectures and ſermons in the other ſcale, before they can be entirely outweighed.

The firſt reformers being judged by their followers to be under the immediate direction of Heaven, the latter ſeized every occaſion of extolling their *apoſtles*, as the inſtruments of Providence in beſtowing its choiceſt favours on mankind. To them was aſcribed the revival of learning, the diffuſion of arts and ſciences over Europe, with the invaluable privilege of free inquiry. Nor was this enough: they were even ſaid to have reſcued the Divinity itſelf from that ſtate of humiliation, into which the idolatry of Rome had degraded it. It is beneath the dignity of reaſon to uſe argument in refuting a charge ſo deſtitute of all plauſibility; a charge, which could only originate in malice, and ſubſiſt only by impudent falſehood or contemptible ignorance. However, Papiſts have had the ſatisfaction to ſee themſelves vindicated from

from this foul aſperſion, by the favourable teſtimony of Proteſtants themſelves; and if it be honourable to be acquitted, on trial, by the unſuborned evidence of an adverſary, Roman Catholics may boaſt of this ſingular honour. The idolatry of Roman Catholics conſiſts either in their adoration of the ſacrament, or in their veneration of the departed ſpirits of holy men. The latter is a mere quarrel about words; the former practice has been juſtified by ſeveral Proteſtants, high in the line of preferment, as well as of learning *. On what foundation, then, reſts the cry of Romiſh idolatry? On the credit of thoſe who were once intereſted in decrying Popery; on a mis-ſtatement, either accidental or intentional, of Popiſh tenets; and on the natural propenſity of men to believe the worſt of a ſyſtem, which they ſee diſcountenanced both by the religion and government of their country.

It muſt have appeared as improbable to be believed, as it was impoſſible to be known, by the founders of the Church of England, that the time would come, when the moſt inſulting of all reproaches would be caſt on an eſtabliſhment, by them deemed the boaſt of human wiſdom, and the

* Biſhop Andrews, in his Anſwer to Bellarmine, ch. viii. p. 194. Biſhop Forbes, De Euchar. c. ii. § 9. De Dominis, Dean of Windſor, under King James I. Alſo Biſhop Taylor, and Mr. Thorndike.

glory of the Reformation. Idolatry was the principal plea, on which the firſt reformers juſtified their ſeparation from Rome. That plea is now ſet up by the Unitarians againſt the Church of England: and to a Roman Catholic it muſt be entertaining, to ſee the neceſſity of a ſecond reformation maintained by the ſame reaſons which were formerly uſed to juſtify the firſt. In the ſixteenth century, Proteſtants reproached Catholics with idolatry, for worſhipping the Hoſt: the ſame reproach is now made to the Proteſtant Church of this country, by the Unitarians, for worſhipping the perſon of Chriſt *. The firſt reformers, to ſupport their charge againſt Rome, appealed to ſcripture: Catholics, to refute it, appealed alſo. From ſcripture, which, ſince it was written, has never been found competent to decide a ſingle controverſy, both parties went to the Fathers, and both laid claim, yet not with equal confidence, to the favour of thoſe ancient and venerable authorities. Similar to this has been the method of conducting a late controverſy, in which the Church of England has been called on to clear herſelf from the heavy charge of idolatry. The ground ſhe has taken, and the weapons ſhe has employed in her defence, are thoſe of which the Church of Rome

* "While, in the Trinitarian diſpute, the *orthodox* regard "their opponents as blaſphemous, theſe conſider the former as "chargeable with idolatry."—Monthly Review, Vol. LIX. p. 170.

Rome made uſe in repelling the attack of the firſt reformers. By ſome it is thought, her champions find themſelves, like David in Saul's armour, a little awkward in the uſe of their popiſh weapons; while they cannot forget that their arguments are thoſe, of which they *once* diſputed the force, and that a reaſoning, which is not always concluſive, is never concluſive.

There is no aſſociation of ideas more habitual in this country, than that of Popery and ſuperſtition. The latter being inconſiſtent with morality, at leaſt with an enlightened morality, I conceive it is perfectly within the plan of this inquiry, to examine on what foundation the religion of Rome has been denominated *ſuperſtition*. Superſtition is the extravagance of religion, originating in fanciful and miſtaken notions of the Deity and the divine diſpenſations. Its effect is, either to flatter men with the deluſive hope of pleaſing God by opinions and practices not allowable, or to terrify them with a groundleſs apprehenſion of offending him by the omiſſion of what he neither commands nor approves. Hence the idea of ſuperſtition implies an error concerning the terms of acceptance, together with miſtaken notions of the Deity, and of the obligation of performing that which is enjoined by no law. Now, as of different ſects the opinions are different, relatively to theſe points, it may be expected, that to them who are leſs rigid, the

the more rigid doctrine or diſcipline will appear ſuperſtitious. Thus the Papiſt, who, in the matter of penance, beſides unfeigned ſorrow for ſin, requires a diſtinct and verbal declaration or *confeſſion* to be made to a prieſt, will undoubtedly by the eſtabliſhed church be conſidered as an abettor of ſuperſtition. But will not the latter alſo be involved in the ſame guilt, while it maintains the neceſſity of works, which the Methodiſt denies, or while it requires the obſervance of certain ceremonies and other inſtitutions, of which the Diſſenters diſapprove? "Who then ſhall exactly "aſcertain to us what ſuperſtition is? The Ro- "maniſt is charged with it by the Church-of- "England-man, the Churchman by the Preſby- "terian, the Preſbyterian by the Independent, "all by the Deiſt, and the Deiſt by the Atheiſt. "With ſome, it is ſuperſtition to pray; with "others, to receive the ſacrament; with others, "to believe in revelation; with others, to believe "in God *." To me it appears, that no argument can have weight to prove the religious practices of any ſociety to be ſuperſtitious, unleſs it be firſt proved, that the principles on which theſe are grounded, are falſe and erroneous. For inſtance, if the prayers of the living are beneficial to the dead, how can it be ſuperſtition to believe in purgatory?

* Olla Podrida, No. XIII. conjectured to be the production of the learned Preſident of Magdalen College.

gatory? If a man, after repentance, ſtill remain obnoxious to certain *temporal puniſhments*, which, however, may on certain conditions be remitted to him, where is the ſuperſtition of *indulgences?* If, in the collective body of Chriſtian prelates, there reſide the ſame legiſlative power, of which it appears from ſcripture * that the apoſtles were poſſeſſed, how can it be ſuperſtition or bigotry in a Papiſt, to obſerve the faſts and holidays appointed by his church? This obſervation applies not only to practices in the Romiſh church, but alſo to thoſe of the church of England. If, for example, the heads of a national church are authoriſed to ordain ceremonies for the members of that church †, how can the obſervance of them be ſuperſtition? Alſo, if the government of Chriſtian churches has been adminiſtered from the commencement of Chriſtianity, by miniſters inveſted, in virtue of conſecration, with powers diſtinct from, and ſuperior to, thoſe of the prieſthood, how can epiſcopacy be deemed ſuperſtitious tyranny? It is evident, that none of the above-mentioned inſtitutions can be reaſonably pronounced ſuperſtitious, till the fallacy of the principles on which they are reſpectively founded, be firſt eſtabliſhed.

It were to be wiſhed, therefore, that men would more frequently conſider the *grounds* of the different

* Acts xv.

† This is aſſerted in the 20th of the 39 Articles.

rent obſervances in religion, and their connexion with one another: they would not then, for every difference of ceremony, brand ſuch as diſſent from themſelves with the odious epithets of *bigoted* and *ſuperſtitious*; nor ſhould we hear, as we often do, thoſe to be loudeſt in the cry of ſuperſtition, who are leaſt acquainted with the ſignification of that word. Hence it appears how little regard is to be paid to the clamour againſt Popiſh ſuperſtitions: it is the imputation of a vague, uncertain, undefinable crime, and therefore well ſuited to the vulgar. Superſtition, I doubt not, is to be found among Roman Catholics, as well as other denominations; nor can the moſt bigoted churchman deny that it may be found in thoſe of his own communion*.

The zeal of Proteſtants has been frequently awakened at the view of the numerous ruins of monaſtic edifices which have ſurvived the ancient eſtabliſhment, and which, at this diſtance of time, ſeem to depoſe that "from the beginning it was "not ſo." To theſe, the zealot of the preſent day appeals, as monuments of ancient ſuperſtition. But with what juſtice?—The ſuperſtition of many actions, as indeed the morality of all, is to be eſtimated

* It will ſcarcely be conceived how great a number of ſuperſtitious notions and practices are ſtill remaining and prevalent in different parts of theſe kingdoms.—GROSE's Provincial Gloſſary. 1787.

mated from the motives with which they are performed. He who expects that, by building a monaſtery, or by bequeathing a legacy to the church, he ſhall, without further difficulty, obtain the favour of Heaven, and by that way atone for unrepented crimes, is certainly ſuperſtitious: but if that man, after a life of repeated violence and rapine, be touched with repentance, and beſtow the wealth he has acquired by injuſtice on thoſe whom he believes likely to apply it to the beſt uſes, I ſee not the connexion of ſuch conduct with ſuperſtition. I believe, upon inquiry, it will appear that the two principal motives by which our anceſtors were led to make their numerous bequeſts to the church, and their highly-liberal endowments of monaſtic communities, were, firſt, that of appropriating their riches to the benefit of themſelves and relations after death, conformably to the tenets of the eſtabliſhed religion; and, ſecondly, of performing an act of juſtice, in conſideration of the violent uſurpations of either church or lay property, made in the courſe of thoſe perpetual wars incidental to the feudal government. Of theſe motives, the laſt has nothing of ſuperſtition in it; and the firſt can only be ſo far deemed ſuperſtitious, as the doctrine of an intermediate ſtate of ſuffering is ſuppoſed to be falſe; a ſuppoſition, denied by at leaſt as many as they are by whom it is affirmed.

Superſtition

Ignorance. Superſtition is generally the offspring of ignorance. It is not, therefore, wonderful that they who are charged with the former ſhould bear the reproach of ignorance, and alſo of encouraging ignorance. But of this weighty accuſation, what are the grounds? what are the proofs?—It will not be pretended that the Romiſh Clergy is leſs attentive than our own to the duty of preaching and of delivering private inſtruction. If any one be of this perſuaſion, he muſt be not only unacquainted with the injunctions and practice of the Romiſh Church, relatively to this point, but muſt be a ſtranger to the notion of what the vulgar calls a *Popiſh emiſſary*. Zeal and activity were never doubted to be among the ingredients of that character. If I am not miſtaken, Biſhop Burnet * himſelf does that juſtice to the Roman Catholic Clergy, to allow them the merit of aſſiduity in preaching and inſtructing the people: but they want not the *valuable*, becauſe unwilling, teſtimony of Burnet; they appeal to thoſe of this country who have either known them abroad, or obſerved them at home, and dare them, with all their partiality to the eſtabliſhment, to deny that the Romiſh Clergy is, I ſay not, equal, but ſuperior to our churchmen, in frequent inſtruction, and in the diligent inculcation of religious truths.

With

* Diſcourſe on the Paſtoral Care.

With reſpect to the holidays appointed in the book of Common Prayer, it is well known how religiouſly they are obſerved. In the Church of Rome, theſe days are obſerved with far greater exactneſs; and they who attend divine ſervice depart not without the benefit of a practical diſcourſe or lecture. Their ſacraments, more frequently adminiſtered, becauſe more in number than in the Church of England, are commonly attended with expoſitions ſuited to the occaſion; and, what is principally to be remarked, catechiſm, both private and public, is performed with the utmoſt punctuality. In ſhort, whoever conſiders this difference between Proteſtants and Papiſts, will be inclined to ſuſpect that, as far as ignorance depends on the conduct of the clergy, the former are more obnoxious to this charge than the latter: and he will be confirmed in his ſuſpicions, if he only obſerve more minutely the very inconſiderable degree of religious information in the lower people of this country, and the want of opportunity to acquire more: indeed, both have lately begun to appear ſo ſtriking, and the conſequences of them ſo alarming, that, to remedy the evil, a new inſtitution has been adopted, I mean that of *Sunday Schools*. They who have been moſt active in promoting that ſcheme of charity and benevolence, ſeem to have conſidered the neceſſity of the meaſure more than the origin of that neceſſity. Had they inveſtigated the latter, they would, I am confident, have quickly diſcovered the want of moral inſtruction

ſtruction in the people, to originate in the neglect and inability of the clergy to comply with the catechetical part of their office. Let pluralities be aboliſhed; let reſidence be enjoined; and let the canons, which require frequent catechiſm, be enforced; and, Iam perſuaded, the loud and opprobrious complaint of ignorance in the lower claſſes will ceaſe*. The continual outrages againſt ſociety,

* About the time when the laſt royal proclamation againſt immorality appeared, a ſenſible and well-written letter was inſerted in the General Evening Poſt, from *an Old Magiſtrate*, in which the neceſſity of the clergy co-operating with the magiſtracy, and the inefficiency of every penal law, without ſuch co-operation, is very pointedly aſſerted. "That effectual "guard," the letter-writer obſerves, "which fear, ſo eaſily "conquered by habit, cannot alone inſtill, muſt be derived "from early and conſtant inſtruction, moral motives, and a "ſort of inſtinctive reverence; for the expediency of ſuch "laws can never be efficaciouſly admitted, unleſs the know-"ledge of God and a futurity, the principles of good and "evil, and their neceſſary conſequence to a rational being in "a probationary ſtate, be as duly inculcated, as the Britiſh "legiſlature requires by its ſtatutes, and encourages by its "ample ſupport of an eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment . . . . But "do the judicial and executive powers derive from the clergy "that aſſiſtance which they are bound to give, and without "which preventive juſtice is impoſſible, and punitive can be "only ſanguinary and capital? . . . . Can the people be "reformed by puniſhment, without due inſtruction and ex-"ample? or thoſe afforded without the moſt regular perform-"ance of our religious rites? or that legally attended to, with-"out a reſident miniſter? In correcting, therefore, the ſemi-"naries of vice, let the executive power reſtore too thoſe of "virtue to their appointed efficacy. A zealous clergy would "nearly enſure an active magiſtracy."

ciety, and the continual executions of criminals, which reflect ſo much diſhonour on this country, are pronounced by all to be melancholy proofs of the ignorance as well as of the depravity of the people. If it be ſo, and if the above facts be thought to prove a want of inſtruction, as I am ſure they do a want of principle among us, ſurely it is with a very bad grace that we reproach Papiſts with ignorance.

It may however be ſaid, and, I own, more plauſibly, that certain regulations of the Romiſh Church tend towards the encouragement of ignorance in the people; and on this occaſion the * *Index expurgatorius*, and prohibition of the ſcriptures, are brought forward with oſtentatious confidence.

That there has ſcarcely appeared one valuable work on the ſubject, either of ſcience or morality, which has not been ſome time proſcribed in the *Index*, is an aſſertion of which only the unawed effrontery of the anonymous Encyclopediſts was capable†. The deſign of the *Index* was to point

 out

* A catalogue of ſome of the moſt remarkable books publiſhed at different times againſt the Romiſh religion, and on that account forbidden to be read by Roman Catholics. This catalogue, it is ſaid, was neither reviſed nor approved by the Council of Trent, but only by Pope Pius; and therefore is not regarded in ſeveral Popiſh countries.

† Art. *Index*.

out ſuch books as were judged improper to be read by Roman Catholics. The principle by which it has been juſtified, is that the circulation of writings againſt the religion eſtabliſhed by law, is inexpedient and pernicious. Now, whatever be thought of this principle, certain it is, that Proteſtants as well as Papiſts have adopted it both in theory and in practice. In every country the eſtabliſhed religion has been generally ſupported by penal laws; and among theſe, one will always be found prohibiting the publication of books againſt the religion of the ſtate*. Even our own country is no exception in this matter. He who has looked into our ſtatutes, muſt have obſerved that ſome of our Proteſtant Princes in England were as little friends to the freedom of thinking or writing, as the Popiſh contemporaries on the continent†. Nor let it be ſaid that theſe ſtatutes were deſigned to reſtrain the freedom of political inquiry; the contrary is evident, from the very tenor of the acts, as well as from the circumſtances of

* The court of high commiſſioners, in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, puniſhed at diſcretion all words and writings that had a tendency to hereſy or ſchiſm.—HUME's Hiſtory, Vol VI. p. 158.

† 3 and 4 Edward VI. c. 10. 3 Jac. I. c. 1. Queen Elizabeth's proclamation againſt the importation of forbidden books and pamphlets, under pain of martial law, may be ſeen in STRYPE's Eccleſiaſtical Memoirs, Vol. III. p. 570.

of time in which they were paſſed* Now, relatively to liberty of thinking and writing, for that is the point to be conſidered, this ſurely is no leſs effected, when a book is condemned by the Parliament, or by the King's proclamation, than when it is entered in the *Roman Index*. Indeed to me it appears that religious liberty has more to fear from the former circumſtance, than from the latter. The power of the King and Parliament is uncontеſted, uncontrolled, ſupported by the whole weight of the legiſlature, and ſo extenſive as to comprehend every individual of the church and ſtate; while the authority of the *Index* is circumſcribed within the limits of certain countries; nor can it even there be exerted without the conſent of the clergy of thoſe countries. Hence it appears that Proteſtants are not unacquainted with the principle on which the Index proceeds in prohibiting what are deemed to be heterodox writings: and if to recriminate were to refute, it would not be difficult for Catholics to clear themſelves of the charge of encouraging ignorance. If, however, the conſequence be inſiſted upon, that ignorance is encouraged by the prohibition of certain books, let it be extended, without partiality, to all who are concerned in the premiſes; let Proteſtant England, as well as Papal Rome, be included in

* Hume, ſpeaking of the reigns of Elizabeth and her ſucceſſor, ſays "that liberty of conſcience, which we ſo highly "value at preſent, was totally ſuppreſſed." Vol. VI. p. 158.

the charge: let it plead equally guilty; at leaſt, let it not throw the firſt ſtone at its accomplice in guilt.

The outcry againſt Popery for having forbidden its followers the reading of the Bible, is yet louder than that which has been raiſed by the above-mentioned cauſe. Againſt this prohibition the reformed have exclaimed with greater zeal and unanimity, than on moſt other occaſions. Of the Romiſh doctrines there is ſcarcely one which has not been ſo fortunate as to find an abettor in ſome or other of the Proteſtant ſects*; but the prohibition of the ſcriptures has met with ſuch univerſal diſapprobation, that I know not one of the reformed who has attempted to juſtify it. One exception perhaps muſt be made to the latitude of this aſſertion. Henry VIII, ſome years after his rupture with the Pope, procured an act to be paſſed in parliament, by which he forbad the lower claſſes of his ſubjects to read the ſcriptures either in public or in private†. It is remarkable that, in the preamble to this act, the very ſame motives are ſtated for enacting it, which the Romiſh divines have aſſigned in juſtification of that rule

* This is evident from *Brerely's Apology*, publiſhed in the reign of James I. about the year 1608, under this title, *The Proteſtants Apology for the Roman Church.*

† 34 and 5 Hen. VIII. c. 1.

rule of the *Index* which reſtrains the indiſcriminate reading of the ſacred writings. Pope Pius, therefore, and his divines, were not ſingular in their ideas of the neceſſity of ſome reſtriction on the common people in the uſe of the Bible. Indeed, from the very beginning of our preſent church eſtabliſhment, it has been uſual for the clergy to inveigh againſt that "fearleſſneſs of aſ-"ſertion," and that licentiouſneſs of interpretation, which are produced through the ignorance and preſumption of incompetent readers. But, notwithſtanding they have eſtabliſhed the premiſes, in common with Roman Catholics, yet they have appeared ſhocked at the concluſion, though inevitable. They have ſeen and acknowledged the abuſe of the inſpired volumes, when ſubjected to the comments, or rather to the illuſions of an ignorant and giddy multitude*; and, in the hiſtory of England, during the laſt century, they have beheld diſorders unprecedented, and acts the moſt atrocious, at once ſuggeſted and defended by the miſconception of ſcripture doctrines; and yet they are ſhocked at the application of the only effectual remedy, that of reſtraining the indiſcriminate reading of the ſcriptures. I am, indeed, well aware of the impoſſibility of a reſtrictive ſcheme being

* Queen Elizabeth, in her ſpeech to parliament, in the year 1584, ſaid, "that, as ſhe could diſcern the preſumption "of many in curiouſly canvaſſing the ſcriptures, ſhe would no "longer endure this licenſe."—HUME, Vol. V. p. 264.

carried into execution among Proteſtants. Were theſe of a temper to ſubmit tamely to ſuch a reſtriction, ſtill its abſurdity would prevent any attempt to impoſe it. The Bible is the entire code of a Proteſtant's belief: to take that from him, therefore, would be to take away his religion. He acknowledges no revelation; he admits no belief nor practice to be obligatory, but what he finds in his Bible. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic is taught to conſider the ſcripture neither as the *only*, nor as the *eſſential*, rule of his faith. When, therefore, he is told that, of them who read the ſacred books, many pervert them to their ruin; and that, from frequent experience of this abuſe, the heads of his church have been led to lay ſome reſtraint on the people in the uſe of them, he is not afraid of being deprived of his religion with his Bible; becauſe he has learned that, as Chriſtianity exiſted before the ſcriptures were written, ſo it may continue when theſe ceaſe to be read. He will not believe it more impoſſible that circumſtances ſhould juſtify a reſtraint on reading the Bible, than that they ſhould more than once have authoriſed Proteſtants to lay a reſtraint upon preaching. In the reign of Edward VI, it ws forbidden to preach; and, at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, a proclamation was iſſued, by which all preaching was prohibited, without a ſpecial licenſe*. Yet is

* See Hume's Hiſtory of England, Vol. IV. p. 309, and Vol. V. p. 7.

is the office of preaching a divine appointment; and its obligation is expreſſed both in the Goſpels and in the Epiſtles of St. Paul, with far more deciſive evidence than that of reading the Bible*. If, therefore, the *heads* of a reformed church, in all the primitive fervour of reformation, were ſo bold as to ſuſpend, on account of the peculiar exigence of the times, the exerciſe of a divine commiſſion, I ſee not with what juſtice the members of that church now reproach Roman Catholics for having taken a leſs liberty in a matter of leſs moment: for, by the diſcipline of the Romiſh church, even when and where it was obſerved relatively to this matter, I find the uſe of the Bible was never prohibited, but only regulated; not withdrawn from the laity, but ſecured from the conceitedneſs of the preſumptuous, and the caprice of the fanatical. Even that diſcouragement which is expreſſed in the *Index*, from permitting the unlimited uſe of the Bible to the vulgar, appears to have been only occaſional, and to have been ſuggeſted more by the particular circumſtances of the times, than by any original or characteriſtic doctrine of the Catholic profeſſion. Above one hundred years ago, the injunction ſo often alluded to was conſidered by many eminent writers of the Romiſh church, more as a temporary expedient to prevent the circulation of unfaithful verſions at

* Math. c. xxviii, v. 19 and 20. Mark, c. xvi, v. 15 and 16. Acts, c. iv. 2 Tim. c. iv.

the time it appeared, than as an article of general diſcipline*. At this day, the Catholics in England, France, and Germany, are as free and unmoleſted in reading the Bible, as the Proteſtants of any ſect whatever; and, if the above-mentioned rule in the *Index* be regarded by Catholics of other countries, it is, I ſuppoſe, more through awe of an ancient, unrepealed ſtatute, than through conviction of any actual advantage from the obſervance of it.

It is not however my buſineſs to inquire how far a reſtraint thus qualified, on reading the ſcriptures, is conſiſtent with the liberal ſpirit of Chriſtianity; but whether it be productive of wickedneſs and immorality. The divine may perhaps be not eaſily reconciled to it; but the politician will, I believe, ſee nothing in it to alarm his apprehenſions for the ſafety of the commonwealth.

I know it has been often aſſerted that the prohibition of the ſcriptures is the effect of a well-grounded fear, leſt the people ſhould remain no longer ignorant and attached to ſuch ſuperſtitions, as it is confidently ſuppoſed they would diſcover to be totally unfounded in the ſacred writings. Of this inſinuation, it is hard to ſay whether the folly or injuſtice be greater. What! is it credible that the

* In this light it has been conſidered by Pere Amelotte, Cardinal Richelieu, Gretſer, Serrarius, and Nicole.

the Romiſh clergy ſhould apprehend a detection of pious frauds from the ignorance of an undiſcerning vulgar, rather than from the acuteneſs, the erudition, and application of more learned and enlightened readers?—Doubtleſs they have much to fear from the ſtupidity and dulneſs of unlettered mechanics, who have yet ſeen nothing to fear from the bold and liberal inquiries of a Boſſuet, a Calmet, and a Geddis! They who are moſt forward in throwing out theſe ſuſpicions, are at the ſame time the very firſt to magnify the deep-laid policy, the well-connected and widely-comprehenſive ſyſtem of papal ſuperſtition. But if the hierarchy of Rome dreaded the diſcovery of I know not what impoſtures, ſurely this artful and enterpriſing body would have ſhown more of that wonderful policy which is ſo liberally attributed to it on other occaſions, by wreſting the Bible from the *learned*, than by laying a merely temporary and occaſional reſtraint on the uſe made of it by the *unlearned*.

I will conclude theſe obſervations with a few words on the common complaint of Popery being deſtructive of free inquiry. If this ſyſtem*, like that of Mahomet, ſuppreſſed in its votaries every effort of genius, if, like that, it condemned every attempt to enlarge the boundaries of ſcience and ingenuity,

* His conquering tribes th' Arabian Prophet draws,
And ſaving ignorance inthrones by laws. POPE.

ingenuity, it would then deſerve every degree of diſcouragement which even *our* penal ſtatutes againſt Popery have authoriſed and inflicted. But of ſo dangerous a tendency in this religion, what is the proof? or rather, what is the pretence? Is it that the mind, repoſing on *infallibility*, becomes indolent and incapable of examination, reſigning all its powers to a blind credulity, and a torpid acquieſcence in every doctrine propoſed?—Let it be remembered, that they who allow the force of this argument, admit alſo themſelves an *infallible* authority; to wit, the ſcripture; of the contents of which, they judge it no leſs impious to doubt, than a Roman Catholic does to doubt of the doctrines of his church. A revelation, it ſeems, is received by both as infallible, and as competent to controul the private judgment of the believer, whether Catholic or Proteſtant. The authority of revelation being determined on both ſides to be indiſputable, the only ſubject therefore of inquiry, is the extent of this revelation; that is, whether it comprehends the creed of Pope Pius, or whether it be confined to the thirty-nine articles. Now, to enter upon this inquiry is as freely permitted and as earneſtly recommended by the religion of Rome, as by all the boaſted indulgence of Proteſtantiſm. A Catholic who ſeeks to learn what has been revealed concerning any article of his faith, is as much at liberty to conſult his *church*, as a Proteſtant is to conſult his *Bible*. But when theſe have

have once decided, neither can reaſonably queſtion, much leſs reject, the authority of the deciſion*. Where then is the ſuperiority of the Proteſtant over the Papiſt, in this buſineſs? Is it that the former, after having learned his creed from his Bible, may lay it aſide, if he pleaſes, and take up another?—Such a licenſe may be indeed tolerated from neceſſity, becauſe, if claimed, it cannot be denied without violating the fundamental principle of Proteſtantiſm; but how far it is conſiſtent with the idea of *faith* expreſſed in the writings of the New Teſtament, I leave to others to determine.

Doctrine of excluſive Salvation.

Popery has been repreſented, not only as ſpreading darkneſs over the underſtanding, by the artifices above mentioned, but alſo as corrupting the heart by a ſpirit of uncharitableneſs and miſanthropy: for what elſe, it has been aſked, could lead perſons of that perſuaſion to conſign all beſides themſelves to everlaſting

* "What liberty of diſcuſſion, or, if you will, of doubting, "does any Chriſtian poſſeſs, that we have not?—When we "are *convinced* that God has ſpoken, it would be infidelity "not to ſubmit. What matters it from whence this convic- "tion may ariſe?—You are convinced from ſcripture alone; "we from ſcripture, as interpreted to us: but there is a time "when we are both convinced. After this, indeed, if you "ſtill chooſe to ſearch, I own it is a liberty to which we do "not pretend."—BERINGTON's Addreſs to Hawkins, p. 31 and 32.

laſting miſery? What place can be left for benevolence in that mind which connects the idea of atrocious guilt with involuntary error, and judges the belief of ſpeculative opinions to be of equal importance with the diſcharge of moral obligations? The *excluding doctrine* certainly does ſeem to convey a very pointed reflection on the judgment and conduct of all who are not Papiſts; and, ſtated as it commonly has been, is equally inconſiſtent with either charity or truth. This doctrine has accordingly been conſtantly objected to Roman Catholics, in terms of the moſt poignant reproach and keeneſt reſentment. It is generally believed, that theſe zealots pronounce ſentence of eternal damnation on all who die out of their own communion; and that every man, of whatever moral character, not fortunate enough to have been a Papiſt, is conſidered by them as incapable of future happineſs. Truly, "this is a hard ſaying, and "who can bear to hear it?" It is not, however, that of Roman Catholics.

They indeed teach, that the Author of Chriſtianity diſcloſed to mankind a new ſyſtem of revealed truths, and a new ſcheme of religious worſhip; that theſe were committed, for their preſervation and promulgation, to a ſociety by him eſtabliſhed, and called *the church*; that this church does not conſiſt of many independent bodies, diſunited in belief and government; but that it is a

ſociety

ſociety of Chriſtians, all admitting the ſame articles of belief, and the ſame forms of eccleſiaſtical polity; that the church being of divine eſtabliſhment, its creed and government of divine inſtitution, men are not left to their own caprice and humour in the choice of religion, but are obliged to become members of that ſociety, and profeſſors of that faith, of which the foundations are common with thoſe of Chriſtianity itſelf. Hence a Roman Catholic obviouſly infers, not that every one who lives in a different perſuaſion from his own, will be unhappy in a future ſtate; but that he who omits to embrace that communion among Chriſtians, in which he ſincerely believes the profeſſion of Chriſtianity to be pureſt and moſt unadulterated, is guilty of counteracting the beneficent views of Providence in the conſtitution of a church. They are not the ignorant or misinformed whom he condemns; but ſuch as, having known the truth, are withheld from acknowledging it, either by fear, like Nicodemus, or by human reſpects, like many of the Jewiſh nobles*. Yet of individuals he judges no man; becauſe the circumſtances of an individual, on which his guilt depends, are known only to God and himſelf.

This

* John, ch. xii. v. 42, 43, gives this reaſon why they believed not in Chriſt, or rather why they avowed not their belief in him: "By reaſon of the Phariſees, they did not confeſs "him .... for they loved the glory of men, more than the "glory of God."

This is all the *real* ground of that eternal crimination of uncharitableneſs with which Roman Catholics have been loaded. And to what does it amount? That this people, believing, as it does, the church of Chriſt to be of one faith and one communion, thinks all men, whom the plea of ignorance does not excuſe, obliged to embrace that faith and communion. This is the ſo much execrated doctrine of *excluſive ſalvation.*

But has this doctrine found no advocates among Proteſtants? By the 18th of the 39 Articles, all pagans are excluded from heaven. By the damnatory clauſe, damnation is denounced againſt him who denies any article in the creed of Athanaſius. Many alſo of the moſt eminent divines in our country, have ſpoken the very language uſed by Roman Catholics on this ſubject*. The ſeparation of Proteſtant Diſſenters from the church, is repreſented in the book of canons as "a wicked error," and as deſerving excommunication; two cenſures, that openly threaten Diſſenters with an excluſion from future happineſs. The Managers for the Commons, at a conference with the Lords, on the bill *againſt occaſional conformity*, in the year 1703, juſtified the ſevere clauſes of that bill, by this among other reaſons, that "ſchiſm is a damnable ſin."

* Among theſe, I find the names of Biſhop Pearſon, *Expoſition of the Creed*, p. 349; Mr. Thorndike, Letter *on the Preſent State of Religion*; Dr. Field, *on the Church*, b. i. c. 2.

ſin †." And among other petitions in the Litany, one is, that we may be delivered from *hereſy* and *ſchiſm*; which can only be conſidered as real evils by thoſe who believe ſalvation is endangered by the want of catholic communion, that is, who maintain the doctrine of excluſive ſalvation.

It has lately been the faſhion to extol the liberality of our church eſtabliſhment, and on every occaſion to contraſt it with the narrow ſelfiſhneſs of Popery. Yet the unfortunate coincidence of the former in that very opinion, for which Papiſts are reproached with bigotry and ſelfiſhneſs, is ſo remarkable, that it cannot but render theſe commendations ſomewhat ſuſpicious. The orthodox may indeed pleaſe themſelves with the idea, and compliment one another with the praiſe of diſtinguiſhed tolerance and liberality; but they do well not to appeal to the infidel or diſſenter for the juſtice of their claim to ſuch exalted merit.

Since Proteſtants, as well as Catholics, have maintained the excluding doctrine, the charge of uncharitableneſs muſt, according to the rules of equity, affect the former as well as the latter. The pretence for finding Catholics alone guilty, becauſe theſe confine the church within the pale of their

† Proceedings of both Houſes of Parliament, 1702-3-4, upon the bill to prevent occaſional conformity, p. 12, 13.

their own communion, is frivolous. Does the church of England extend the attainment of ſalvation to any other than Chriſtians*? With equal juſtice then may the Jew or Mahometan reproach that church with uncharitableneſs. Yet a Proteſtant thinks the Papiſt void of charity, becauſe he denies ſalvation to all who are not Roman Catholics, which is not true: and on the other hand, the latter eſteems a Proteſtant little leſs than a free-thinker, becauſe, with undiſtinguiſhing indulgence, he opens the gates of the church to all, even the moſt diſcordant ſects of Chriſtianity. But before any ſolid foundation can be aſſigned for theſe mutual reproaches, the nature and extent of the Chriſtian church ſhould be aſcertained. The ſolution of this problem depends on what is the criterion of revelation, or what is the *rule of faith*. Therefore this queſtion being yet undecided, at leaſt to the ſatisfaction of both parties, it is abſurd to argue from principles before they are eſtabliſhed, and to apply to perſons thoſe epithets which can only be juſtified by concluſions drawn from doubtful premiſes. For inſtance, a Roman Catholic, for maintaining the doctrine of excluſive ſalvation, is reproached by a Proteſtant with want of charity and benevolence. Why? Becauſe he conceives the former to entertain illiberal notions of the conſtitution and extent of the Chriſtian church, by confining

* See the 18th of our 39 Articles.

confining orthodoxy and ſalvation to that ſociety of which he is a member. But who does not perceive this logic is merely local, and only concluſive in a Proteſtant latitude? By it, the ſame man may be proved a bigot in England, who on the continent is eſteemed an orthodox and enlightened Chriſtian.

> One thinks on Calvin Heav'n's own ſpirit fell,
> Another deems him inſtrument of hell. POPE.

If, however, "it behoveth hereſies to be," at leaſt let thoſe who contend for the exerciſe of private judgment, allow as much liberty to Roman Catholics, in judging who are, and who are not, orthodox, as they aſſume to themſelves when they hold up diſſenters, both Proteſtant and Catholic, as guilty of ſchiſm and "wicked errors *." It is ſurely time to deſiſt from a charge which cannot

 be

* See Canons X. XI. in the year 1603. Theſe, and the ſame may be ſaid of almoſt all the twelve firſt Canons, were framed by men, whoſe ideas of church unity and toleration appear to have been borrowed from Papiſts. No one can read the 9th, 10th, and 11th, in the collection above cited, without perceiving that the purport of them is to repreſent the ſeparation of diſſenters as criminal and ſchiſmatical, as a "wicked error," and deſerving eccleſiaſtical cenſure. Of the 10th and 11th in particular, it may be obſerved, that they ſeem to deny, in terms not at all equivocal, diſſenters to belong to a *true and lawful* church. With ſuch ſentiments, it ſeems difficult to reconcile any ſuperior claim of our eſtabliſhment over the church of Rome, to the merit of liberality and toleration.

be ſupported without involving the accuſers with the accuſed.

Perſecution. That all churches have perſecuted, when poſſeſſed of the power to do it, ſeems to be univerſally agreed. The annals of both ancient and modern church hiſtory, eſtabliſh this fact beyond the poſſibility of doubt: yet in England, where this is confeſſed ‡, the Church of Rome is ever diſtinguiſhed among all others, as that which alone perſecutes from principle. Hence every Proteſtant naturally aſſociates the idea of cruelty with that of Popery. I own, after a diligent inquiry, I have never been able to diſcover that principle of Popery, by which its profeſſors are ſaid to perſecute religious diſſenters. If it does really exiſt, it ought to appear either in the canons of

‡ See Robertſon's Hiſtory of Charles V. Vol. IV. p. 205, 206. In the paſſage here referred to, Dr. Robertſon affects to be ſurpriſed at the continuance of religious perſecution after the period of the Reformation, and informs his readers, that the reformers borrowed their ideas of intolerance from Popery. It cannot be doubted, but that the Doctor has read the works of a man whom he extols ſo highly, I mean, of Luther. In the writings of his admired apoſtle, he might have found the following paſſage: "Were I maſter of the empire, I would "make one bundle of Popes and Cardinals, and throw them "all together into the ſea: ſuch a cold bath would cure them." It is eaſy to ſuppoſe how tolerant were likely to be the diſciples of ſo mild, ſo gentle and benevolent a maſter.

of ſome general Council, or in catechiſms, or in the inſtructions addreſſed to Papiſts by their clergy. In which of all theſe may it be found? Not in their ſermons, nor in their catechiſms, nor in the decrees of any general Synod. Relatively to the laſt, though it ſhould ſeem that even a general Council had enjoined to Roman Catholic princes, that they ſhould perſecute reputed heretics within their States, yet would ſuch an injunction conſtitute no term of Catholic communion, and no principle of Catholic duty. The Church of Rome, aſſembled in a general Council, exacts obedience indeed to her *dogmatical* deciſions, but not to every regulation by her enacted concerning the infliction of *temporal* puniſhments. To regulate ſuch concerns is an act, not of ſpiritual, but of civil juriſdiction; and as the Church pretends not to have received from its founder any temporal power, it cannot, without a palpable encroachment on the rights of princes, interfere with authority in their concerns, ſo far as to point out to them who are the objects of legal ſeverity or reſtraint. This reaſoning, *à priori*, intended to prove that Roman Catholics profeſs no principle which leads to perſecution, is powerfully confirmed by the hiſtory of paſt and preſent times. It does not appear, that from Charles V. down to Joſeph II. any of the Emperors have been accuſed, or even ſuſpected, of a departure from their religious principles, becauſe they ab-

ſtained from perſecution*. The ſame remark applies to the Kings of France, from Henry IV. to Lewis XIV. Nor Henry, nor his ſon, nor grandſon, were perſecutors of the Hugonots during the ſpace of a century: yet is the orthodoxy of all theſe princes unimpeached. His preſent Chriſtian Majeſty iſſued an *arrêt*, 1787, highly favourable to the French Proteſtants; and this under the adminiſtration of a Popiſh Archbiſhop: yet no ſuſpicion concerning the faith of either has been even whiſpered abroad. It is therefore a miſtake, of which malignity, I fear, is more the cauſe than ignorance, to aſſert that perſecution is a principle of the Romiſh religion. It will not be denied, that many and violent perſecutions have been carried on by the Church of Rome againſt her adverſaries; but from this confeſſion, to conclude that Roman Catholics perſecute from principle, is ſuch a groſs perverſion of the powers of reaſoning, as it would be only folly to refute. One would imagine, Proteſtants were too conſcious how far they are concerned in the premiſes, to draw from them a concluſion, of which the diſgrace muſt recoil forcibly upon themſelves: for ſurely, if Roman Catholics are perſecutors from principle, becauſe men of their communion have perſecuted; by the ſame mode of arguing, it may be proved, that Proteſtants

* In conſequence of the treaty of Paſſau, 1552, confirmed by the Diet at Augſburg, 1555, and of the peace of Weſtphalia, 1648.

Proteſtants are equally intolerant. Of the latter, that may with truth be ſaid, which the partiality of one of our Prelates * thought proper to apply only to Papiſts, "Never had they mercy long, "when they had power." If that Right Reverend Prelate ſhould think this a bold aſſertion, it is hoped he will not attempt to refute it from the hiſtory of his own country.

Proteſtants, I repeat it, Engliſh Proteſtants, have exerciſed the ſame rigours with which they reproach Roman Catholics; and, to ſupport their eſtabliſhment, have called in the aid of the ſtake and the gibbet. The writ *De hæretico comburendo* was not repealed till more than a century after Popery had ceaſed to be the religion of the nation; and during that time, it was put in execution by Henry VIII, Edward VI, Elizabeth, and James. If we may believe De Foe and Delaune, nearly eight thouſand Proteſtant Diſſenters were deſtroyed in England and Scotland, by confinement and public executions, in only one reign, that of Charles II. † The number is certainly aſtoniſhing;

* Dr. Porteus, Biſhop of London, in his *Brief Confutation of the Errors of the Church of Rome*, p. 85.

† See the preface to Delaune's *Plea for Nonconformiſts*, and that work, p. 28, 29. This publication was puniſhed by a fine and impriſonment of the author, under which he languiſhed till his death, 1685.

yet, after the moſt ample deductions, it is far greater than of thoſe who ſuffered under the Popiſh Queen Mary. The royal commiſſioners employed by Charles in Scotland, Middleton, Rothes, Lauderdale, and Queenſbury, were not more tender of the religious than of the civil rights of the people. Their conduct towards the Preſbyterians may well be compared with that of Lewis XIV. towards the Calviniſts, after he had revoked the Edict of Nantz *. Alſo when the Diſſenters came into power under the Protectorate of Cromwell, it is well known with what ſeverity they enforced their favourite diſcipline. They then retaliated on the church, for all the rigorous treatment they had before received from it.

It is not wonderful that they who exerciſed ſuch rigours on Diſſenters, who were Proteſtants, ſhould ſharpen the edge of perſecution to its utmoſt keenneſs againſt thoſe who, to diſſent from the eſtabliſhment, added the inexpiable guilt of Popery. Whatever was the cauſe, laws were enacted in this kingdom, ſoon after the Reformation was introduced, as bloody as any of thoſe which had been framed by Popiſh Princes and States; and where thoſe laws were not bloody, they were worſe, as they were ſlow, cruel outrages on our nature, and kept men alive only to inſult, in their perſons, every one

* Hume, Vol. VII. VIII. chap. 66.

one of the rights and feelings of humanity †. It is unneceſſary to particulariſe them; only to enumerate them, is to expoſe to infamy the ſtatute book, in which they ſtill appear, written, like Draco's laws, in characters of blood ‡. Were crimes againſt ſociety the objects of this legal proſcription; were the robber, the aſſaſſin, or the traitor, aimed at in theſe ſanguinary edicts, it were well; but the refuſal of an oath ambiguouſly worded, of aſſiſting at the eſtabliſhed worſhip; the ſupport of their own miniſters, the attendance at their own public ſervice, and the obſervance of their religious rites; ſuch are the offences which have drawn upon Papiſts the whole vengeance of the legiſlature. I know it is pretended, that theſe penalties were originally enacted againſt Roman Catholics, not on religious, but on political conſiderations; and that it was not their religion, but their politics, which excited the apprehenſion of the magiſtrate. With what truth this is ſuggeſted, ſhall be hereafter conſidered; at preſent it is ſufficient to re-

 mark,

† Burke's Speech to the Electors at Briſtol.

‡ The fury of that government which deviſed theſe bloody acts againſt Popery, has appeared ſo remarkable to two Proteſtant expoſitors of St. John's *Revelation*, that they have diſcovered in it a completion of the myſterious pouring out of the third vial upon *the rivers and fountains of waters*. It is impoſſible to impreſs a ſtronger idea of the ſufferings of Roman Catholics, than that which is ſuggeſted by this interpretation. See Mede and Lauchlan Taylor *on the Revelation*, c. xvi. v. 4.

mark, that this is the very ſame plea which is conſtantly urged by every perſecuting power. It was the apology of Charles V, of Queen Mary, of Philip II, and of Lewis XIV, for their attempts againſt the religious rights of their reſpective ſubjects. And he muſt be a bigot indeed, who will deny theſe princes to have had as much to fear from the turbulence of the reformed, as Elizabeth and James had to apprehend from the conduct of Roman Catholics.

It is not only, therefore, the code of Theodoſius*, nor the *holy office* of Spain and Portugal, which

* Judge Blackſtone attributes the capital puniſhments of the Donatiſts and Manicheans, to the influence enjoyed by the Romiſh eccleſiaſtics over the weak Princes Theodoſius and Juſtinian. An aſſertion ſo confident, lies open to many obſervations: 1ſt, it is probable that the Judge's clerical acquaintance will not be pleaſed with him for complimenting Popery with an origin of ſuch honourable antiquity. If Popery was the religion of the Eaſt and Weſt, at the beginning of the fifth century, many will ſuſpect that its pretended corruptions may derive from this circumſtance ſomething of that ſanction and reſpectability which have been thought of late no feeble ſupports of the Church of England's doctrine of the Trinity; nor will the Papiſts of the preſent day think themſelves a little obliged to the learned Judge for the very plauſible pretext he has afforded them, of adding to the number of apologiſts for Popery, the reſpectable names of Jerom, Auguſtin, and Chryſoſtom. 2dly, If there exiſted in the fifth and ſixth ages Romiſh eccleſiaſtics who did not perſecute, it is an argument of what I am now contending for, that Papiſts do not perſecute *from principle.*

which threaten deſtruction to the diſbeliever of the eſtabliſhed faith, but alſo the mild, the tolerant, the enlightened legiſlature of Great-Britain. Relatively to the rigours exerciſed againſt reputed heretics, under popiſh governments, though nothing can juſtify them; yet, in the opinion of many, and theſe not partial to Popery, there is a circumſtance which, if it be conſidered, will in ſome degree palliate them. It is a principle advanced by Preſident Monteſquieu*, which ſeems to have

principle. Now, 3dly, that the clergy did not procure from the Emperors, the ſevere reſcripts againſt the Donatiſts and Manicheans, is highly probable; not to ſay morally evident. I challenge any man, converſant in the writings of that period, to produce a ſingle paſſage juſtifying, or tending to juſtify, the capital puniſhment of hereſy, out of any eccleſiaſtical author who wrote from the acceſſion of Conſtantine till the reign of the younger Theodoſius. Many expreſſions of a directly contrary tendency, were this a proper place for them, might be adduced from the works of the Chriſtian Prelates of thoſe times. Theſe have been induſtriouſly collected, and impartially repreſented, by the learned Abbé Hooke, *Principia Religionis Naturalis et Revelatæ*, Vol. III. p. 544, 5, 6, ed. 2, 1773. It is not therefore conformable to hiſtory, to aſcribe the ſevere edicts of Theodoſius and Juſtinian againſt religious diſſenters, to the authority of Churchmen over the minds of thoſe weak Princes. May we not attribute them, with more reaſon, to the jealous deſpotiſm of the Cæſars, who, from controverſial diſcord, apprehended the tranſition might be eaſy to political animoſity? The firſt Chriſtian Emperors, it is well known, bore the title of *Pontifex Maximus*. Now, though together with it they did not claim the plenitude of pontifical

juriſdiction

* Eſprit des Loix, Liv. xxv. c. 10.

have been admitted by Hume*, and certainly was by Rouſſeau†, that, where the magiſtrate is ſatisfied with the eſtabliſhed religion, he ought to repreſs the firſt attempts towards innovation, and only grant a toleration to ſects that are already diffuſed and eſtabliſhed. Now, when we conſider the antiquity of the Romiſh religion, it will be found to have had a prior eſtabliſhment to every other form of worſhip which it has at any time perſecuted.

juriſdiction aſſumed by their Pagan predeceſſors, ſtill would they conſider a departure from that creed, to which they had given a ſanction, as an attack on the Imperial prerogative, and ſubject, as ſuch, to the rigours of legal juſtice. It is not more than two hundred years ago that the modern ſalutary practice of toleration would have appeared to ſtateſmen and eccleſiaſtics, to philoſophers and zealots, ſubverſive of civil ſociety. Even ſo great a reaſoner as Lord Bacon, thought that uniformity in religion was abſolutely neceſſary to the ſupport of government [*l. de unitate eccleſiæ*]. Thus, every magiſtrate oppoſed innovations in religion from their firſt appearance, and employed againſt them all the terrors of law, to diſcourage their propagation§. Is it therefore wonderful that two Princes of weak minds, and on that account open to jealouſy and ſuſpicion, ſhould have adopted the ſame political ideas, that have influenced ſucceeding rulers, and ſhould have dreaded, from a toleration of ſectaries, the ſubverſion of the Imperial power? This ſeems to me a far more philoſophical method of accounting for the origin of perſecution, than to imagine, without any warrant from hiſtory, I know not what faſcinating influence of Romiſh eccleſiaſtics over the feeble minds of the Emperors.

§ Hume, Vol. VI. p. 158.

* Hiſtory of England, Vol. VII. p. 41.

† Lettres de la Montagne.

perſecuted. The doctrines of the diſſenters from Popery, in the 12th and 13th centuries, of Wiclef, of John Hus, no leſs than thoſe of Luther and Calvin, cannot be denied to have been innovations in the religion eſtabliſhed by law. To exclude them, therefore, in the firſt inſtance, the preachers of theſe doctrines were not improperly, according to the above-mentioned authorities, made ſubject to legal coercion. This, I am ſenſible, is no apology for all the cruelties employed by Roman Catholic Princes againſt their Proteſtant ſubjects: yet it is an extenuation of many of them. The ſame, it is plain, cannot be ſaid to exculpate thoſe plans of intolerance and compulſion adopted by the reformed. Perſecution in a Papiſt, is the effect of malignity and impolicy; but, in a Proteſtant, beſides all this, it is downright abſurdity, an inconſiſtency with the very firſt principle of Proteſtantiſm.

They who conſider perſecution to be an eſſential part of the Romiſh religion, may now, in the very ſenſible abatement of perſecution among Papiſts, behold with pleaſure, an important and happy ſymptom of the decline of Popery throughout Europe. Certain it is, that in Rome, the capital of popiſh orthodoxy, not one has ſuffered death ſince the beginning of this century. In Spain and Portugal, the fires of the Inquiſition are either wholly or nearly extinguiſhed; and in other

other Catholic States, the progreſs of toleration has been at leaſt equal to what it has been in this country.

I know not any inſtance of intolerant bigotry in Catholic countries, comparable, either for its recency or its violence, to that which was exhibited in theſe kingdoms, in the years 1779 and 1780. Surely this nation muſt have poſſeſſed a more than ordinary ſhare of religious animoſity and fanaticiſm, when, in the 18th century, the repeal of only one or two penalties, out of many remaining againſt Papiſts, could not be made without endangering, I ſay not the peace, but the very exiſtence of the empire. The audacious tumults here alluded to, are indeed ſaid to have been the ſudden outrage of a lawleſs rabble: perhaps I ſhould apologize to the *Proteſtant Aſſociation* for ſo undignified an appellation of that body: yet, if we turn our eyes to the Commons of Great-Britain, we find them, ſoon after the Riots, little diſpoſed to adminiſter the ſmalleſt conſolation to thoſe of his majeſty's ſubjects, whom nothing but difference of religion had expoſed to the loſs of their property and danger of their lives. On the motion of a Noble Lord, they reſolved that the 18 Geo. III. does not render ineffectual the ſeveral ſtatutes made to prohibit the *exerciſe of the Popiſh religion* previous to the ſtatute of 11 and 12 Gul. III, that all attempts to ſeduce the youth

of this kingdom from the eſtabliſhed church to Popery, are highly criminal according to the laws in force, and are a proper ſubject of farther regulation: at the ſame time the Houſe paſſed an act for more effectually reſtraining Papiſts from *teaching* or taking upon them the education of Proteſtant children*. On theſe reſolutions, I ſhall only remark that they do not diſcover all that perfection of liberality which we attribute, with the moſt exulting complacency, to the government of this country—But the magnanimity of the Peers revolted at ſuch illiberality, and, by rejecting the bill, reſcued at once the Catholics from oppreſſion, and the legiſlature from infamy.

It is impoſſible to diſmiſs this ſubject, without mentioning the *Inquiſition*. From the manner in which our writers ſpeak of that tribunal, one would imagine that it was eſtabliſhed in every Catholic kingdom, and that it was no leſs eſſential to the Church of Rome, than the Pope himſelf. The truth is, that the Inquiſition is as little known in moſt Catholic countries, as it is in England. Where it is continued, it is ſupported by the civil, not by the eccleſiaſtical power; the former finding it an engine well ſuited to the dark, jealous, relentleſs policy of an unlimited conſtitution: for this ſervice it is retained, rather than for the purpoſe of religious

* June 20, 1780.

religious perſecution*. The *holy office*, as it is undeſervedly called, is one of thoſe melancholy remains of ancient barbariſm and intolerance, the view of which ſhould excite our gratitude to Heaven for the preſent ſpirit of humanity and toleration. When we conſider the general practice of perſecution in the 16th century, a practice, of which even the light of reformation could not diſcover the abſurdity; what wonder, that in the 13th century, the Inquiſition ſhould have been eſtabliſhed? "If the High Court of Commiſſion, "which was an inquiſitorial tribunal, with all its "terrors and iniquities†," was erected by Elizabeth, and continued through the whole reign of James, and the greater part of that of his ſucceſſor, no one, acquainted with the hiſtory of ſociety and manners in the 13th age, and with the character of Innocent III, will be ſurpriſed at the eſtabliſhment then made of the Court of Inquiſition. It is more ſurpriſing that a juriſdiction ſo terrible and iniquitous ſhould continue to be exerciſed at the preſent day. However, if it be really exerciſed, we muſt conſider how unwilling men of all denominations are to reſign a power of which they have been long poſſeſſed, and how reluctant has been

* This idea concerning the Inquiſition is confirmed by M. L. T. Spittler, in his Hiſtorical Eſſay on the Spaniſh Inquiſition. Hanover, 1788.

† Hume.

been at all times the ſurrender made by princes of prerogative in favour of liberty. "L'ame "goûte tant de délices à dominer les autres "ames," ſays Monteſquieu*. To ſuch as with clamorous importunity demand why the Inquiſition has not been entirely and univerſally ſuppreſſed—I beg leave to propoſe the following queries: Why was not the High Court of Commiſſion ſooner aboliſhed? Why was the writ *de hæretico comburendo* not ſooner reverſed? or, what is ſtill more pertinent, Why have not the penal laws againſt Roman Catholics been repealed?

Faithleſsneſs of Papiſts to ſuch as diſſent from them in religion.

One other exception to the moral doctrines of Papiſts, remains to be conſidered; which is, faithleſsneſs to thoſe of a different religious perſuaſion. It is not difficult to trace the origin of this heavy accuſation. When the ſeverities of a Proteſtant government towards Roman Catholics were to be juſtified to the public, it was at firſt pretended, that, as Catholics diſſented from the religion of the State, and adhered to a belief proſcribed by law, they were therefore juſtly puniſhed for a violation of the laws of their country. After this, when toleration was recommended either by political prudence, or by the example of other nations, then the excluſion of Roman Catholics from the benefit of that toleration, was defended on a new ground: this

* Liv. xxviii. c. 41.

this was becauſe the latter maintained doctrines hoſtile to civil ſociety, and repugnant to the ſecurity of government. It was then diſcovered that Papiſts, among other pernicious tenets, held themſelves diſpenſed from all obligation of keeping their engagements or promiſes made to heretics; but, as the conduct of Roman Catholics, all over Europe, in their unavoidable intercourſe with perſons of all perſuaſions, ſeemed to render that aſperſion utterly incredible, the charge of Popiſh faithleſſneſs was modified anew. From general, it was made ſpecial; that is, the want of principle, of which Roman Catholics were accuſed, was pretended to extend, not to all their dealings with heretics, but only to thoſe particular tranſactions in which the intereſt of the Holy Church was concerned. Thus, it was not a poſitive or direct crimination, but a wanton ſurmiſe, a wild conjecture, that in certain circumſtances, men knew not what, Catholics would not obſerve that fidelity in their engagements, which it could not be denied they uniformly diſcovered in their general commerce with mankind.

Such vague and groundleſs inſinuations could never have been regarded but by the malevolent or the credulous. If a breach of promiſe were really ſanctified, in the opinion of Roman Catholics, by the pious motive of benefiting the Church, ſtrange it is, that none of the enemies of that Church, prior

prior to the Reformation, ſhould have objected, or even inſinuated, that opinion through ſo many ages of either diſguiſed or open hoſtility. Neither the Emperors in Germany, nor the Gibellines in Italy, among all the reproaches, founded or unfounded, which they caſt ſo liberally on the Popes, ſeem ever to have recollected, or even to have known, this execrable doctrine. They ſometimes accuſe the Popes of breach of promiſe, and even of oaths; but afford not the ſmalleſt grounds for a ſuſpicion, that either the Pontifs or their party conſidered ſuch actions in any other light than as criminal.

Every ſource of the moſt authentic information may be conſulted; ſermons, catechiſms, paſtoral charges, creeds and canons of councils; yet vain will be the moſt diligent ſearch for even the ſhadow of a proof of this pretended faithleſsneſs of Papiſts. What can be more extraordinary than that a ſociety of ſuch extent and antiquity, as is the Church of Rome, ſhould maintain a doctrine of which no veſtige can be traced in the above-mentioned authorities?—It would ſeem that the Papiſts too had their *myſteries*, as well as the ancients: and ſurely Dr. Middleton ought to have remarked this circumſtance, among ſo many others, of a fortunate reſemblance between ancient Paganiſm and modern Popery: he might then have added to his celebrated letter, a few more pages of miſapplied ingenuity, and impertinent erudition. I ſaid that

the execrable doctrine imputed to Catholics cannot be diſcovered either in the writings of their divines, or in the inſtruction of their catechiſts. This however is not all. Near a century ago the Proteſtant author of *An Eſſay towards Catholic Communion*, did that juſtice to the Romiſh caſuiſts, to aſſert, what any inquirer will find true, that they have ever maintained a contrary doctrine, which is, that oaths and promiſes are to be eſteemed ſacred and inviolable, whether they be made to Catholics, Heretics, Jews, or Pagans. In a matter of ſuch general conſent and perfect unanimity, it is unneceſſary to cite the evidence of particulars*.

If the faithleſſneſs of Papiſts towards perſons of a different perſuaſion, appears neither in the ordinary conduct of individuals, nor in the diſcourſes of the clergy from the pulpit; it is equally impoſſible to trace it in their behaviour as a body. On

* The Council of Trent, which, it is well known, is of the higheſt authority with all Papiſts, offered [ſeſſ. 15] to Proteſtants a ſafe-conduct, under protection of which they might ſafely come to, and return from, the city of Trent; and upon him who ſhould dare to infringe it in any point whatever, the Council promiſed to inflict thoſe penalties "which they incur, "who violate ſuch engagements, by the law of both God and "man." Do not, therefore, the Biſhops at Trent acknowledge by theſe words the obligation of themſelves and of all Catholics to keep faith with Proteſtants?

On the contrary, this exhibits their fidelity in the ſtrongeſt light, and ſerves to complete what I think an invincible demonſtration of Roman Catholic honour and principle. It is notorious that in England this people has, through a period of more than two hundred years, been ſubjected to many ſevere penalties for adhering to the Romiſh communion. It is equally notorious, that, by realizing the ſuppoſition of Proteſtants, and by reducing to practice that ſyſtem of perfidy which it is ſaid to maintain, this people might formerly, and may at preſent, elude the operation of ſuch penalties: yet Roman Catholics have continued uniformly reſolute in refuſing thoſe oaths, by which, if taken, they might have acquired the favour of their governors. The intereſt of individuals, as well as the honour of the body, muſt, in the ſpace of ſo long a time, have induced them to embrace every meaſure for their deliverance, which might be adopted without guilt or remorſe.

It is not in the nature of man, voluntarily to relinquiſh thoſe advantages of which Roman Catholics deprive themſelves, while it is in his power to enjoy them. And is it not in the power of Catholics to enjoy them, if they are only prevented from it by oaths which, being tendered by heretics, they are taught to believe are not obligatory?

—This argument, drawn from the conduct of Roman Catholics, admits no reply. It muſt appear concluſive, in ſpite of either the ſubtlety of the ſophiſt, or the reaſon of the philoſopher; and it precludes that laſt ſubterfuge of caviling polemics, that Papiſts, however honeſt on other occaſions, are inſtructed always to ſacrifice their honeſty to their bigotry, when *the intereſt of the body* requires it: for it will not be denied that, to eſcape from the preſſure of legal ſeverities, by taking the oaths preſcribed, would be highly advantageous to the body of Engliſh Catholics; yet the proſpect of ſuch deſirable relief has never ſhaken their integrity; nor has the moſt galling oppreſſion provoked them at any time to ſeek revenge on their oppreſſors, by affording them the inſecure pledge of faithleſs oaths.

I could wiſh not to hear of the Council of Conſtance and of the unfortunate Hus; not becauſe the argument drawn from the conduct of that aſſembly is in any degree formidable, but that it is unpleaſant to ſay again what has been already ſaid a thouſand times; yet to arguments founded on a miſſtatement of facts, there is only one reply, to deny the premiſes, and of courſe reject the concluſion. I muſt therefore deny, firſt, that either Sigiſmund, or the Prelates at Conſtance, violated their engagements with John Hus for the ſecurity of his perſon: and, 2dly, I deny that the lawfulneſs of

of breaking ſuch engagements, on pretence of being contracted with heretics, was proclaimed in the Council of Conſtance.

It is confeſſed that Sigiſmund granted a *ſafe-conduct* to the Bohemian Divine; and that, notwithſtanding this, he afterwards ordered him to be burned for hereſy. But what was the effect, what was the benefit of a ſafe-conduct? The Civilians anſwer, "to protect him to whom it was "granted, againſt all illegal violence, but not to "ſcreen him from public juſtice*:" it was not a pardon, nor had it any reference to the iſſue of the trial. All this was known to Hus. At his execution he did not arraign either the Biſhops, by whom ſentence was paſſed on him, nor the Emperor, by whom the puniſhment conſequent to ſuch ſentence was inflicted, of a breach of faith. And Luther, who, among the *articles* of his doctrine, condemned by Leo X, has written expreſsly concerning Hus†, though he be as prodigal of cenſure on the Biſhops, as of panegyric on the Bohemian Reformer, yet is entirely ſilent relatively to any charge of perfidy againſt the enemies of the latter. Sigiſmund, therefore, violated no engage-

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* Myſingeri Obſervationes Judicii Imperialis Cameræ, Obſ. 82. SPECKHAN, Centuria prima, qq. Juris, Q. 1, § 18. This author cites many writers of his profeſſion for the ſame opinion.

† Art. 23.

ment with Hus, when he ſuffered the Imperial laws againſt hereſy to be executed, in conſequence of which Hus was condemned to the flames. The ſafe-conduct granted by the Emperor, afforded him protection againſt the illegal violence of individuals, but could not prevent either the declaration or execution of a judicial ſentence.

As to the Biſhops who compoſed the aſſembly at Conſtance, they inſtituted a canonical inquiry concerning the opinions of John Hus, and condemned them as heretical—himſelf alſo, for obſtinately adhering to thoſe opinions, they declared a heretic. That this proceeding of the Prelates was contrary to the ſafe-conduct granted by the Emperor, will hardly be ſaid; ſince even they who were moſt intereſted to aſſert it, have not yet affirmed that a ſafe-conduct was any bar to a trial, but only to the puniſhment of the criminal.

In the 19th ſeſſion, the Council declared, that though a protection were granted by the Emperor to heretics, ſuch grant ought not to be deemed a reaſon why the eccleſiaſtical court ſhould not take cognizance of their opinions, and puniſh them, if they appeared to perſiſt in them. And it alſo declared, that the Prince from whom the ſafe-conduct had been obtained, " *having done all that he* " *could on his part, to obſerve his engagement*, was " under no farther obligation." The rancour of polemics

polemics has extorted from theſe words, a direct and open avowal of the doctrine, that faith is not to be kept with heretics. Yet this inference, one would imagine, is ſufficiently obviated by the Council requiring of him who has engaged to protect heretics by his royal authority, that he ſhould do every thing in his power to perform his engagement. Such an injunction it is impoſſible to reconcile with the doctrine juſt mentioned. It ought alſo to be obſerved, that the Council only then declares a prince releaſed from the obligation of diſcharging his promiſe of protection made to heretics, when it has been made by him "to the "prejudice of the Catholic faith, or of eccleſiaſti-"cal juriſdiction." To me, therefore, it ſeems to have been the principal intent of the above declaration, to eſtabliſh the independence of Churchmen on the civil power, in the buſineſs of ſuppreſſing religious innovations: and, becauſe by granting ſafe-conducts the Prince might impede the courſe of canonical proceedings, the Council affirms in this celebrated decree, that Princes ſhall not be held by any promiſe made to ſcreen heretical convicts from eccleſiaſtical proſecution, ſuch promiſe being prejudicial to the faith and church, and therefore not binding. Whether the defence of reputed heretics, againſt eccleſiaſtical cenſures, was really prejudicial to the faith, and whether the Council of Conſtance was anxious for a privilege to which the Church had an indiſputable claim, is

preſent an unneceſſary inquiry. That Council releaſed Princes from their engagements to protect heretics againſt the Church, becauſe it judged ſuch protection *prejudicial to the faith, and to eccleſiaſtical juriſdiction*; and not becauſe it deemed it unlawful to keep faith with heretics.

If any doubt ſtill remain concerning the ſenſe of the decree above cited, a deciſive comment on it may be found in one of the queries enjoined by the ſame Council of Conſtance, to be propoſed to all perſons of ſuſpected orthodoxy*. The query is, "Whether they believe wilful perjury, com-" mitted for whatever reaſon, though for the pre-" ſervation of our own or another's life, of our " country, or *even in favour of the faith*, be a " grievous ſin?" The laws of juſt criticiſm require, that paſſages of doubtful meaning in an author be explained conformably to others, of which the ſenſe is clear and unambiguous. Now from the query it is evident that, in the opinion of the Biſhops at Conſtance, perjury is unlawful, though it be committed for the benefit of the church, or for any other cauſe whatever. The inference therefore is plain, that the above-mentioned decree of the Prelates does not contain that execrable doctrine, which ſome have pretended to diſcover

* See Pope Martin's bull in the 45th and laſt ſeſſion of the Council of Conſtance.

diſcover in it, of the lawfulneſs of breaking faith with heretics.

It muſt be owned, that, though of the former accuſations alleged againſt Roman Catholics, almoſt every one has been ſhewn to affect the credit of Proteſtantiſm, as well as of Popery; yet from the laſt we might have expected to find Proteſtants entirely clear. The origin of the Reformation, made in oppoſition to every thing that bore the name of Church throughout Europe, naturally leads us to ſuppoſe its votaries would not at firſt look on hereſy with the moſt violent emotions of horror. The apparent, if not real, difficulty of wiping away from themſelves the ſtain of hereſy, rendered them, not without reaſon, extremely cautious in faſtening that odious charge upon diſſenters. It was not till a century had paſſed from the change of religion, that the rulers of the national Church ventured to inſert in the Litany a petition to be delivered from hereſy. But when time had thrown a veil over the Reformation, which concealed its novelty from the eyes of the vulgar, then the heads of Proteſtant eſtabliſhments began to diſcover the perverſeneſs, and to declaim, with more zeal perhaps than conſiſtency, againſt the obſtinate indocility of heretics. Among theſe, the Papiſts, being the moſt ancient and moſt incorrigible of heretics, could not fail to be the moſt obnoxious. A Proteſtant Biſhop was heard to declare, in the moſt unequivocal language,

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from the pulpit, that faith was not to be kept with Papiſts. Nor was this doctrine of the Biſhop of Meath without effect: the articles of Limeric were impudently violated, and the violation of them was adviſed and encouraged by the perfidious tongue of a Proteſtant Prelate *.

At the latter end of the reign of Charles II, when Papiſts were arraigned for a plot, of which they were almoſt inſtantly acquitted by their very enemies, ſuch ſcenes of perfidy and injuſtice were exhibited by the government of this country, as ought to ſilence for ever the cry of Engliſhmen againſt Popery for faithleſsneſs to heretics. The multiplied perjuries of Oates, Dugdale, Bedloe, and Dangerfield, were encouraged, were ſolicited, and even welcomed, in the courts of juſtice, as legal evidence for ſhedding the blood of innocent men †. Of the latter, the innocence was ſo ſhortly after diſcovered, and ſo univerſally acknowledged throughout the nation, that it ſeems impoſſible it ſhould have been unknown to their proſecutors and judges ‡. On what principle then are we to account

* "Doctor Dopping, Biſhop of Meath, preaching before "the juſtices at Dublin, argued that the peace ought not to "be obſerved with a people ſo perfidious" [as Catholics]. Harris's Life of King William, f. 353.

† Hume's Hiſtory of England, Vol. VIII. p. 90, 98.

‡ "We may conclude from ſuch impatience of contradiction, "that the proſecutors themſelves retained a ſecret ſuſpicion, "that

account for the admiſſion and encouragement of ſuch perjured evidence, except that it was eſteemed not unlawful to employ even perjury itſelf againſt the execrated Papiſt? That ſome ſuch principle was aſſumed, may be inferred, not only from what has been already mentioned, but alſo from the words of the Lord Chief Juſtice, by whom the Papiſts had the ill fortune to be tried, in his addreſs to the jury: "They have not the principles," ſaid his Lordſhip, "which we have; therefore they "are not to have that common credence which "our principles and practices call for. They are "not to wonder, if they keep no faith, that they "have none from others *."

We have hitherto contemplated Popery in a religious rather than a political view; more as a ſyſtem of belief and practice, than as an eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment; in ſhort, as a ſubject rather for the moraliſt than for the magiſtrate. If its tendency be not unfriendly to the duties of morality and of civil ſociety, let the veil be at laſt withdrawn that has long concealed its genuine tenets from the public eye; let it be cleared from the

"that the general belief of a plot was but ill grounded. The "politicians among them were afraid to let in light, leſt it "might put an end to ſo uſeful a deluſion." Hume, Vol. VIII. p. 99.

* Trial of Ireland, Pickering, and Grove, 1678, ed. fol. p. 74, 5.

the imputation of fictitious tenets; and let it be viewed with the ſame tolerant ſentiments, which we would be thought to entertain concerning the religious ſyſtems of every Chriſtian denomination. The friends of our eſtabliſhment are the more intereſted in abating their prejudices againſt Roman Catholics, as there are really few, very few points of diſagreement between them, which they cannot juſtify by the example and authority of Proteſtants. The juſtice of this obſervation muſt have frequently ſuggeſted itſelf already in the preceding pages of this inquiry; and it will appear ſtill more conſpicuous, if it be conſidered that, among the reproaches made by diſſenters to the eſtabliſhed Church, from the days of Elizabeth, one has ever been the reſemblance of the eſtabliſhment to the Church of Rome. Whatever be the weight or juſtice of this accuſation, it is highly unbecoming the wiſdom of a Proteſtant legiſlature, and the liberality of an enlightened people, to treat with diſtinguiſhed ſeverity thoſe religioniſts, of whom the morality is at leaſt as pure as of other ſects tolerated by law. What though it be pretended, that Popery is full of corruptions, errors, and abſurdities? Such a pretence may indeed kindle the zeal of a controverſialiſt; but it ought not to rouſe the indignation, or arm the vengeance of the magiſtrate. Here many, I am aware, will reply, "It is not the religion of Papiſts, it is "their

" their politics which we dread *. Their acknow-
" ledgement of a foreign dominion and uſurpation,
" the enterpriſing and ambitious ſpirit of their
" clergy, their lofty ideas and arbitrary doctrines
" on the ſubject of government; and laſtly, the
" reſtleſs and turbulent conduct of Roman Ca-
" tholics towards Proteſtant governors; theſe,
" they exclaim, are the motives of our jealouſy
" and apprehenſions: againſt theſe we have been
" forced to guard by penal laws."

Acknowledgment of a foreign dominion.

That Roman Catholics acknowledge a foreign dominion, it may appear effrontery in me to deny, if the number of thoſe be conſidered who have affirmed it. I do however deny it; and am convinced that a charge ſo invidious could never have gained credit for a moment, without a moſt impudent miſrepreſentation of the Roman Catholic doctrine concerning the Papal prerogative †. For this end, all the low arts

* Blackſtone's Commentaries, Dean Tucker, Dr. Porteus, p. 85. Brief Confutation, 1781.

† I ſay the Roman Catholic *doctrine*, not the opinions of Romiſh divines, on this ſubject. Of theſe, many at the time of the Reformation, and long after, aſcribed to the Pope a real foreign dominion, that of depoſing Princes in caſes of hereſy and apoſtacy. But that opinion, which has been long obſolete, was never conſidered as one of the neceſſary terms of Catholic communion, or as a teſt of Romiſh orthodoxy. Though, out of

arts of controverſy, from the barefaced lie to the more ſubtle perverſion of language from its ordinary meaning, have been employed. The acknowledgment of a purely *ſpiritual* juriſdiction in a foreign Biſhop, has been called a ſubmiſſion to foreign dominion. Roman Catholics do indeed attribute to the Biſhop of Rome ſome degree of authority, not however in temporal matters, over the reſt of Chriſtian Prelates. By that authority he can neither moleſt the perſons, nor invade the property, of thoſe who are ſubject to him. In reſpect of both of theſe, every Catholic Prelate is wholly independent on the Pope: and if independent on the Pope in that which conſtitutes the twofold object of dominion, how can he be ſaid to be ſubject to a foreign dominion? But to have ſtated in this light the ſentiment of Catholics concerning

of France, they who affirmed the depoſing power were very, perhaps moſt, numerous, yet there were never wanting among Catholics, oppoſers of a doctrine entirely repugnant to the dignity and ſovereignty of kings. At this time, it would be as difficult to find among Catholics an apologiſt for the depoſing power of the Pope, as it would be to find among Proteſtants an abettor of the doctrine, that dominion is founded on grace. Formerly, both opinions had their followers, not only in theory, but in practice. It is a folly, therefore, or rather it is an injuſtice, to confound the opinions of Roman Catholics with the articles of Roman Catholic belief, and to make the whole body of Catholics reſponſible for the abſurdities of their ſchoolmen. On ſuch principles, the Church of England, and every Proteſtant Church, would have much to anſwer for.

cerning the Papal primacy, would have never anſwered the views of their enemies, as it would never have intereſted the paſſions of the multitude. For this purpoſe, ſubmiſſion to the ſpiritual juriſdiction of a foreign Biſhop, was conſtrued into a transfer of civil allegiance to him; and by the officious ſubſtitution of expreſſions more obnoxious than what were uſed by Catholics, this people was brought in guilty of abetting foreign power and uſurpation. By a ſophiſtry equally diſingenuous and contemptible, by calling that *adoration* which ſhould be expreſſed by the more qualified term *veneration*, or *reſpect*, it has been attempted to prove, that the Papiſt who honours the departed ſpirits of virtuous men, is as blind and as criminal as the Pagan who bows down before his idol to adore it *. It is painful to obſerve in human nature ſo much illiberality mingled with ſo much animoſity; and ſtill more melancholy, to diſcover theſe ſhades in ſome of the moſt enlightened characters of this country.

After theſe complaints of the injuſtice of anti-papiſt writers, in miſſtating the tenet of Papal ſupremacy, it will be expected that I ſhall ſtate the

* Brief Confutation of the Errors of Popery, p. 23, 4, 5, by Dr. Porteus, Lord Biſhop of Cheſter. Is it thus his Lordſhip exemplifies the precept of St. Paul to a Chriſtian Biſhop? "Do the work of an Evangeliſt, make full proof of thy mini-"ſtry." 2 Tim. iv. v. 5.

the Roman Catholic belief on this point with greater fidelity. This I will readily do, after aſſuring the reader that he need not fear being involved in a labyrinth of controverſy, though on a ſubject on which ſo many hundred volumes have been written. From this

> Gulf profound, as that Serbonian bog,
> Where armies whole have ſunk,*

I wiſh to keep clear; ſolely intending to review the Popiſh doctrine, not as conformable to Revelation, but as connected with the political intereſts of nations.

The Author of Chriſtianity neither exerciſed himſelf, nor imparted to his followers, any degree of earthly dominion. The Apoſtle therefore, from whom the Biſhops of Rome claim their ſupremacy, having received from his Maſter nothing more than ſpiritual juriſdiction, theſe cannot pretend to inherit from their apoſtolical predeceſſor thoſe powers which he never poſſeſſed. Conformably to theſe principles, the preſent race of Catholics, whatever may have been the opinions of their anceſtors, allows not to the Pope any authority which may interfere with the exerciſe of the civil power. They bow with conſcientious ſubmiſſion to the civil as well as ſpiritual juriſdiction, and maintain the reſpective independence of each, in the execution of thoſe

* Paradiſe Loſt, b. ii. v. 592.

thoſe ordinances, the enforcement of thoſe ſanctions, and the diſcharge of thoſe offices, which have been committed by Heaven to either their political or eccleſiaſtical rulers. They openly profeſs obedience to the laws of the land, from which they affirm that no Papal diſpenſation can abſolve them. In ſhort, they reject all the antiquated claims of ambitious Pontifs, to either a direct or indirect dominion in temporals *.

" But while they acknowledge a foreign power " ſuperior to the ſovereignty of the kingdom, " they cannot complain if the laws of that king- " dom will not treat them on the footing of good " ſubjects †." A foreign power! Who would imagine that the enlightened author of *Commen-*

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* It will be vain to look for theſe ideas of a diſtinction between the Church and State, in the duſty tomes of ſchoolmen and caſuiſts: theſe were in general prepoſſeſſed with all the prejudices of their age in favour of the Court of Rome, and were themſelves more immediately ſubjected to its tyranny. Yet that the independence of crowned heads was known and maintained even in the darkeſt ages, is apparent from the annals of our own country, from thoſe of France, and of the Empire. I do not pretend that this ſentiment was entertained ſo univerſally as at this day; that it influenced every meaſure which was agitated, or determined every difference which aroſe between the Church and the State. I only aſſert, that the ſentiment was not unknown, and that it was not proſcribed by the religion of the times.

† Blackſtone, b. iv. c. 4.

taries on the Laws of England would have deſcended to ſo pitiful an *équivoque*, and ſheltering himſelf under that *équivoque*, would have inſinuated a charge, which by fair and manly arguments he knew it was impoſſible to ſupport? If there be any force in the above-cited words, to prove what the author intended, it is neceſſary, that by a *foreign power* we ſhould underſtand a power veſted in ſome foreigner over the fortunes or perſons of his Majeſty's ſubjects. And is then a foreign power of this deſcription acknowledged by Roman Catholics? For an anſwer, I refer to the oath of allegiance tendered to Roman Catholics in 1778; I refer to the courts in which that teſt has been ſubſcribed by all the nobility, gentry, and clergy of that perſuaſion, who have unanimouſly and ſolemnly diſavowed the foreign power which Judge Blackſtone tells us they all acknowledge. As I mean not to war with the dead, it is unneceſſary to examine here, whether it was ignorance or a worſe motive that influenced the Judge, in a charge at once ſo pointed and ſo ill founded. It is more material to obſerve how violent, how rooted, and how prevalent muſt be the animoſity of this nation againſt Papiſts, when one of the firſt characters in it, both as a ſcholar and a magiſtrate, was ſo little free from it as we have juſt ſeen.

The authority of the Pope, whatever be its extent, being wholly ſpiritual, both in its origin and

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its uſe, can never diſconcert the counſels, or obſtruct the operations, of the Sovereign. The Prince and the Pontif have diſtinct juriſdictions, diſtinct objects in view; and, to attain theſe, have recourſe to different methods. The primacy of the Pope, therefore, cannot be ſuperior to the ſovereignty of the kingdom; nor can the acknowledgment of it, without a moſt extraordinary figure in language, be conſtrued into a ſubmiſſion to foreign *dominion*. For, after all, in what does this primacy conſiſt? If we conſider the original tenure of it, prior to the conceſſions made in its favour both by Church and State, we ſhall find it to conſiſt, not in any one individual act of ſpiritual juriſdiction, which another prelate may not exerciſe in particular circumſtances; but in that ſpecial obligation, by which the Pope is bound in ſtrict juſtice, and *ex officio*, above other Biſhops, to maintain the purity of religious doctrine, and the obſervance of general diſcipline throughout the Chriſtian Church. Now the epiſcopal prerogative of maintaining faith and diſcipline, which, exerciſed throughout Chriſtendom, conſtitutes the Papal ſupremacy, is, I ſuſpect, aſſerted by our own Prelates within their reſpective diſtricts, as independent on the Crown. I am ſure it has been aſſerted by their predeceſſors *: and in

* Archbiſhop Wake, cited by Collier, Vol. II. Eccleſ. Hiſt. p. 89. Biſhop Stillingfleet. Eccleſiaſtical Caſes, p. 327. Biſhop Andrews againſt Bellarmine, p. 367; with all the Prelates of that and the following reign.

Scotland it is notorious, that the Kirk has ever proteſted its independence on the magiſtrate in eccleſiaſtical matters. How therefore the foreign claim of a ſpiritual juriſdiction, which is actually exerciſed with independence on the Prince by his own ſubjects, can affect the ſovereignty of the kingdom, or degrade the majeſty of the throne, is what I am unable to comprehend.

But it may be pretended, that Roman Catholics are obnoxious to government for denying the eccleſiaſtical ſupremacy of the King. If, by the regal ſupremacy, we underſtand that unlimited power over the Church, which was conferred on Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth, by their reſpective Parliaments, and which conſtitutes the Prince the fountain of all eccleſiaſtical juriſdiction, and authoriſes him "to reform, order, &c. all ſuch "errors, hereſies, &c. which by any ſpiritual au-"thority may lawfully be reformed," it is true, Roman Catholics do not acknowledge ſuch a ſupremacy. They attribute to the King the utmoſt extent of temporal power which the conſtitution allows him; but the origin and exerciſe of ſpiritual power, they believe to reſide excluſively in that order of men which is diſtinguiſhed by the name of *Clergy*. Whether to maintain this be *a wicked error* *, which it certainly is in England; or

* See the ſecond Canon, 1603.

or whether it be not, as it certainly is not out of England; is by no means the queſtion. What I contend for at preſent is, that this error is perfectly harmleſs in a political point of view. It neither queſtions nor impugns his Majeſty's right to the whole executive power, and to his conſtitutional ſhare of the legiſlative authority in theſe kingdoms. It oppoſes not his claim to the honour of being the firſt magiſtrate of the people, nor does it tend to deprive him of any of thoſe advantages which contribute to the authority and grandeur of monarchs. The end and benefit of government are, to ſecure the perſons and property of thoſe who live under it from the attacks of violence and ambition: for this purpoſe men have aſſociated together, have ſubmitted to the control of law, and ſurrendered their private rights for the enjoyment of public juſtice and ſecurity. To theſe views of ſociety, and the means of attaining them, I am unable to diſcover what obſtruction ariſes from a denial of the eccleſiaſtical ſupremacy of Kings. If Roman Catholics denied to the Prince any prerogative, by which he might be enabled more effectually to diſcharge the duties of royalty, in this ſuppoſition they ought to be compelled to relinquiſh a doctrine inconſiſtent with civil allegiance. But this cannot be pretended, unleſs it be thought that obedience to the laws can only be enforced by excommunication, and other acts of ſpiritual juriſdiction. Few will doubt, whether

Henry VII, without the aid of a ſpiritual ſupremacy, found himſelf leſs enabled to afford protection to his ſubjects, or to maintain public tranquillity and order, than his ſon Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, inveſted, as theſe were, with the awful character of *Head of the Church of England.*

It muſt not be imagined, that the guilt of refuſing to acknowledge the King's ſupremacy, as expreſſed in Acts of Parliament, has been always confined to thoſe of the Romiſh perſuaſion. The arrogant aſſumption of this ſingular prerogative was no ſooner known to the world, than it excited either the indignation or aſtoniſhment of every Proteſtant out of England: all the diſciples of Luther and of Calvin were highly diſſatisfied with this unprecedented regulation of the Engliſh Church, or rather of the Engliſh Parliament. Even of Engliſh Proteſtants themſelves, ſome of conſiderable reputation, beſides the whole numerous ſect of Puritans, refuſed the oath of ſupremacy at the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign *. A doctrine ſo extraordinary, a doctrine blaſphemous and ſacrilegious, to uſe the epithets applied to it by an eminent reformer †, could never have originated

* Preface to Dr. Stapleton's Reply to the Biſhop of Winchester concerning the Oath, 1567. Neale's Hiſtory of the Puritans.

† Calvin in Amos, c. vii.

nated but in the impetuous paſſions of Henry, and the ductile ſervility of Cranmer; nor could the *pious* views of the Prince and his Primate fail to be ſeconded by the flattery of a Parliament, of which both the political and religious creed ſeems to have been borrowed from the ſchool of the Florentine Philoſopher.

But whatever might be the origin of Henry's pretenſion, and that of his ſucceſſors, to eccleſiaſtical ſupremacy, this is certain, that ſuch pretenſion was admitted by none but by their own ſubjects. Other Princes, beſides Henry and his children, embraced the religion of Proteſtants; but of theſe, none aſſumed the title of *Head of the Church*. Neither the ambition of kings, nor the flattery of their miniſters, produced any thing in that age ſimilar to this extravagance of our countrymen: among all the reformed, they alone had the ſagacity to diſcover, the credulity to believe, and the confidence to ſwear, that kings are competent "to "reform all hereſies and errors, and to act as "judges in all eccleſiaſtical cauſes." In rejecting the doctrines of Proteſtants, a Papiſt may be encouraged by the countenance of his own ſectaries; for rejecting the King's ſupremacy, he has the additional authority of every reformed church but that of England.

They who obſerve the more moderate ſentiments of the preſent day concerning the eccleſiaſtical power of our Kings, will be perſuaded with difficulty that a ſerious claim to ſpiritual juriſdiction was really made by their predeceſſors. Let ſuch, if ſuch there be, only look into the ſtatute book*; let them only conſult the hiſtory of thoſe times, and they will ſee, if any comment be wanted on the ſtatutes of Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth, whether it may not be beſt found in the conduct of theſe Princes in church affairs. I ſay then, that the power attributed to the above-mentioned Princes by their reſpective Parliaments, was ſtrictly ſpiritual, and the ſource from which all ſpiritual power, to be exerciſed in the nation, was derived. Extraordinary as that grant appears to us, and almoſt incredible; yet, whether we conſider the probable intention of thoſe who made it, or the obvious meaning of the terms in which it was made, the evidence of ſuch a grant is inconteſtable. By it, the Church, which had long triumphed over the State, was completely ſubjected to the temporal power: its canons were exchanged for ſtatutes, its mixed government was converted into deſpotiſm, and its miniſters held their juriſdiction by the ſame precarious tenure by which the juſtices held their commiſſions for the peace. Religion was

* 24 Hen. VIII. c. xii. & xix. 25 Hen. VIII. c. xxi. 37 Hen. VIII. c. xvii. 1 Ed. VI. c. ii. 1 Eliz. c. i.

was degraded into ſtate-policy; and that conſtitution of Church and State, which the author of *The Leviathan* * has ſince ingeniouſly delineated and elaborately extolled, then ſubſiſted in reality.

That the clergy of Henry and Edward concurred in theſe wild notions of the Court and Parliament, cannot be doubted. It may however be queſtioned, whether the monſtrous doctrine of a lay ſupremacy ſurvived long the oath enacted to ſupport it in the firſt year of Elizabeth. Its abſurdity was ſo manifeſt, that even the impudence of thoſe times bluſhed at it. Early in the reign of that Princeſs, and during its progreſs, an attentive obſerver will remark ſymptoms in the clergy, of a diſpoſition to claim certain ſpiritual powers †, independently of their *ſupreme Governeſs, in all eccleſiaſtical things or cauſes*. Under the reign of James I. and that of his ſon, the hierarchy was in its glory; and during that period, both the language and ſentiments of churchmen were little conſiſtent with either the oaths or the ſtatutes enacted under the three firſt Proteſtant Princes, on

* Leviathan, Part III. c. 42.

† Anſwer to the Declaration of my Lord Abbot of Weſtminſter, by Doctor Horn, Biſhop of Wincheſter, 1564, f. 96, 108. Dr. Haddon's Letter to Oſorio, Biſhop of Sylvez in Portugal, 1563, Archbiſhop Parker's Expoſition of the 37th Article, 1562, and his addition to the beginning of the 20th Article, 1571, are all proofs of this aſſertion.

on the ſubject of ſupremacy. The divine right of Biſhops, which then came into faſhion, was alone ſubverſive of that tranſcendent and ſupreme power in ſpiritual matters, which it was the avowed object of former legiſlatures to eſtabliſh. This divine right, which inferred the independence of Biſhops on the King in ſpiritual concerns, was denied by few, if by any, of thoſe who affected to appear orthodox. Theſe explained the King's ſupremacy, as conſiſting in the government of all eccleſiaſtical perſons within his Majeſty's dominions, in the execution of the eccleſiaſtical canons, and in the protection and ſupport of the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment.

The regal ſupremacy, thus explained and underſtood, was acknowledged by the Puritans. Theſe ſectaries, ſatisfied with the comment of Archbiſhop Parker on the 37th Article, and with the injunctions of Elizabeth, ſcrupled not to take the oath of ſupremacy in a meaning which the words certainly ſeemed to exclude. In this qualified ſenſe, Roman Catholics alſo admit the King's ſupremacy *, although they have never taken the oath pre-

* Abbot Fekenham, at the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth, offered to the Biſhop of Wincheſter to take an oath expreſſive of the Queen's title to ſupreme governeſs of this realm, and all her Highneſs's dominions, and of her ſovereignty over all perſons born within the realm, whether eccleſiaſtics or laymen.—Stapleton's Reply, as cited above, p. 14.

preſcribed by law: for, as the form of that oath firſt appeared, it contained ſuch doctrine as even Proteſtants turned aſide from with diſguſt. It might indeed expreſs one meaning, and be ſubſcribed in another: but, notwithſtanding on one hand the example of the Puritans, and on the other the ſuppoſed diſregard of oaths made to heretics, Roman Catholics have never conſented to ſubſcribe an oath in a ſenſe contradictory to that which the words exhibit in their obvious acceptation. Moreover, the oath implied, and ſtill continues to imply, a denial of that ſpiritual juriſdiction over the Chriſtian Church, which all Catholics maintain to be veſted in the Biſhop of Rome. For theſe reaſons they have uniformly refuſed the oaths of ſupremacy. Yet were an oath ſo framed as to expreſs the King's eccleſiaſtical prerogative, in the manner in which it is defined in the appendix to the 37th Article, I think I could pledge myſelf for it being ſubſcribed by every Catholic in England.

Ambitious and enterpriſing ſpirit of the Clergy.

A paſſionate charge is ſeldom conſiſtent. The ſame voice, which proclaims the ambitious and enterpriſing ſpirit of Romiſh churchmen, informs us alſo, in the ſame breath, that they are ſlaves to a foreign Pontif, to whom they pay a ſubmiſſion little leſs than abject ſervility. In this inſtance, as in many others, the violence of the accuſers is more remarkable than their conſiſtency, and renders their evidence

evidence ſuſpicious or incredible. I do not deny that the Romiſh clergy is ambitious. Ambition is a principle inherent in our nature; but that this paſſion is either the effect of religion in a Popiſh clergyman, or that it burns more fiercely in his breaſt than in that of another man, this I deny. Among all the calumnies forged in this land of liberality againſt Papiſts, I have not yet diſcovered any that directly charges their religion with encouraging men to become ambitious. It is not Popery, then, which kindles ambition in its miniſters; it is paſſion; and this being a principle common to all, we are not authoriſed to confine the reproach of ambition to any particular body of men.

But it will be aſked, Did not the clergy of the Church of Rome, previous to the Reformation, attain to a moſt exorbitant dominion over all ranks and conditions of men; a dominion repugnant to the moderation of its profeſſion, and to the rights of ſovereign princes? I confeſs that it did. Yet, granting this, I admit not the concluſion, which is, that Roman Catholic churchmen are more diſtinguiſhed by a ſpirit of ambition and enterpriſe than the reſt of men. It ſhould be remembered, that Papiſts have ſubſiſted during a much longer period than Chriſtians of any other denomination. Popery, in the annals of its eſtabliſhment, comprehends many of the moſt important revolutions

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in the hiſtory of mankind; the fall of the Weſtern Empire, the origin of the feudal inſtitutions, the wild projects of the cruſaders, and the univerſal ſpread of ignorance and barbariſm over Europe. In all theſe events the Church of Rome was deeply intereſted. It has ſtood therefore in more complicated relations to the civil power, than any other religious ſyſtem of the preſent time. Where then is the wonder, if, in the courſe of an eſtabliſhment above four times more ancient than that of the Reformation, its hierarchy ſhould have been ſo fortunately circumſtanced, as to gain an aſcendant over the other orders of ſociety? In the perpetual fluctuation of ancient governments, we obſerve ſometimes the prince, ſometimes the nobles, and at other times the people, preponderate in the ſcale of power. It is not therefore extraordinary, that, in a ſucceſſion of ages, the Clergy ſhould find itſelf ſo ſituated in regard of the State, as to be able to incline the balance in favour of the Church. Surely that is a ſurly, cynical philoſophy, which accounts for events by aſcribing them to cauſes, not the moſt probable, but the moſt criminal, and which allows to men no means of becoming ſucceſsful, but ſuch as are connected with vice. Men are vicious enough in reality: for the honour then of human nature, let us not imagine them more guilty than they actually are.

The exaltation of the Romiſh clergy to that high degree of grandeur and dominion which it poſſeſſed in the middle ages, is a ſingular phænomenon in hiſtory. The principal cauſes of that exaltation, originated in the ſtate of ſociety and polity * in Europe, and not in the influence of the eſtabliſhed

* It is beyond a doubt, that the feudal government was highly favourable to the aggrandizement of the clergy. Firſt, The heads of both ſecular and regular clergy were Barons, and from their numerous fiefs derived all that conſequence and reſpectability which ariſe from extenſive landed property. Secondly, The Church, in thoſe times of univerſal rapine and devaſtation, was, by its immunities, ſecured in the peaceable enjoyment of its poſſeſſions. That ſecurity it extended to its vaſſals, and alſo to many others, who ſurrended their lands, and even their perſons, into the hands of the Church, that they might be ſafe under the ſhadow of its privileges. Thirdly, Under the feudal policy, the prerogative of kings was ſo much circumſcribed, that they could neither protect the innocent, nor puniſh the guilty. Many, therefore, of their ſubjects ſought protection from the Church; and naturally enough tranſferred to it ſome portion of that allegiance which they owed to the crown. Fourthly, The king and the nobility conſidered each other, with ſome reaſon, as hoſtile and rival powers. Each ſolicited the favour and intereſt of the Church againſt its enemy; and, from this ſituation, it was impoſſible that the Church ſhould not acquire a conſiderable degree of political influence. Fifthly, Under the feudal anarchy, none but clergymen enjoying perſonal ſecurity, they alone had an opportunity to cultivate the arts. Their ſuperiority to the reſt of the community, in this particular, muſt have rendered them frequently neceſſary to the court, and muſt have procured them all that diſtinction which is paid to the learned in a barbarous age.

eſtabliſhed religion. Should theſe cauſes, which God forbid, exiſt again, in the ſame extent, I doubt not but that the ſame effects would again become viſible, whatever might then be the ſyſtem of religion ſupported by law. Where things are ſo conſtituted, that on one ſide is ignorance without inſtruction or education, and on the other is ſound learning and capacity for buſineſs, there the latter will infallibly command reſpect and eſteem, with all the advantages which theſe commonly afford. Ignorance and inexperience, in the revolution of human affairs, will always be overmatched by knowledge and ability; and in every conteſt, the latter are found to acquire an aſcendant over the former*. It was the misfortune of the middle ages, that in them none but clergymen were fitted by their education for the management of any buſineſs, except war. Theſe the government was neceſſitated to employ on all occaſions, where addreſs or information was required. From them ambaſſadors were appointed to conduct almoſt every negociation of importance. In that feebleneſs of a feudal adminiſtration, where the king was controlled by the combination of a formidable ariſtocracy ever jealous of his prerogative, the clergy muſt have been poſſeſſed of powerful intereſt;

* O impotence of mind, in body ſtrong!
But what is ſtrength without a double ſhare
Of wiſdom? . . . . . not made to rule,
But to ſubſerve, where wiſdom bears command. MILTON.

intereſt; nor would the Court be unwilling to purchaſe the direction of it, by liberal grants of honours and privileges. The nobility, conſcious of inferiority in point of literary and ſcientific acquirements, and alſo of political ability, looked up to churchmen with a high degree of veneration. To theſe, they were indebted for the education of their children; all the learning of the times, however inconſiderable, being wholly confined to churchmen. The people derived from the clergy, not only the benefits of religion, but alſo in ſome degree the comforts of ſociety, as far as theſe depended on public tranquillity. Both by profeſſion and intereſt, the clergy was led to diſcourage all wars, as well public, between ſovereign princes, as private, between the nobles. With this view, it forbad, in many Councils, all warlike operations to be carried on at certain ſeaſons of the year; and, with the ſame laudable deſign, it eſtabliſhed the celebrated *truce of God*. The Prelates not only endeavoured to prevent the frequency of wars, but alſo to ſoften the rigours and ſooth the ferocity of conqueſt. They recommended or enjoined the manumiſſion of ſlaves; and, on many occaſions, they ſold the plate belonging to their churches, to procure the liberty of captives. The privilege of aſylum, annexed to many churches, though at laſt flagrantly abuſed, was originally intended to afford protection to the weak and defenceleſs, againſt the violence of the times. Even

ſome of the incroachments of the epiſcopal order on the civil power, appear to have originated in zealous and well-meant efforts to obtain or eſtabliſh tranquillity by means, it muſt be owned, not perfectly conſiſtent with the independence of temporal princes. In the revenues of every church, a part was allotted for the relief of the poor, and was diſtributed among them by the clergy. Hoſpitals, for the reception of the aged and infirm, were commonly erected by churchmen, and were always under the inſpection and government of that order. It is not wonderful that they who contributed by different ways to the good of the community, ſhould have obtained from it reſpect and eſteem. And if to theſe conſiderations we add the benefits derived from the clergy by inſtruction, by pleading in the courts of juſtice, by the practice of phyſic, by the tuition of youth, and by the diſcharge of the firſt offices of ſtate, in all which they were either ſolely or principally employed; it muſt be obvious, that an order of men ſo extenſively uſeful to ſociety, would acquire no inconſiderable ſhare of influence over it. When government anſwers not the end for which it was inſtituted, the enjoyment of peace, and the protection of property, little reverence or ſubmiſſion will be ſhown to it: and if theſe advantages be obtained, either wholly or in part, from another body of men, the attachment to government will be looſened, and transferred to that body, as a reward of the benefits

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diſpenſed by it. The aggrandiſement therefore of the clergy, muſt be attributed to the weakneſs of the magiſtrate, the turbulence of the nobility, the peculiar advantages of churchmen, advantages that aroſe from the calamity of the times; rather than to I know not what imaginary ambition, of which the exiſtence is without proof, and the ſucceſs without example.

The ignorance of the age alſo operated in another manner towards the preponderance of eccleſiaſtical power: it not only prevented the diſcovery of many errors and prejudices in the minds of men, but gave authority to thoſe prejudices, by eſtabliſhing the credit of the very ſources of them. Theſe were the *Decretals* and the *Decree* of Gratian. Both encouraged Popes to invade the rights of biſhops, and both authoriſed the incroachments of churchmen on the prerogative of princes. That the reaſon of men ſhould have been ſo unenlightened, as not to diſcern the eſſential and important claim of ſovereigns to the dependence of every member of the community, is the moſt convincing proof that can be deſired of the darkneſs of that age. Of men ſo benighted, and ſo little acquainted with the firſt principles of civil policy, it cannot be expected they ſhould have been critics ſufficient to diſcover the forgery of the ſpurious decretals.

Super-

Superſtition, the offspring of ignorance and barbariſm, concurred with the above-mentioned cauſes, to impreſs the people with a greater degree of ſubmiſſion to the prieſthood, than religion either requires or approves. Among a barbarous people, the prieſt is always an object of particular veneration. Beſides the authority which he commands as a miniſter of religion, he is alſo diſtinguiſhed by all that reſpect and reverence which ſuperſtition never fails to create and attribute to the prieſtly order. Tacitus informs us, that the ancient Germans paid great deference to their prieſts; and that by theſe the order of the national aſſembly was regulated*. It is not wonderful that our anceſtors, deſcended from the very people of whom Tacitus ſpeaks, ſhould, after their converſion to Chriſtianity, continue to treat their prieſts with ſingular veneration, and allow them a place in the great aſſembly of the nation. On ſuch occaſions, their ſuperior acquirements in literature, their education and capacity for buſineſs, could not fail to command both reſpect and intereſt from thoſe who were deſtitute of theſe improvements: nor muſt it be omitted, that, beſides the operation of all theſe general cauſes, there were many *accidental* circumſtances which contributed to the exaltation of the clergy in particular States. Theſe might be eaſily pointed out by the hiſtorian.

* Tac. de Moribus Germanorum, § 7 and 11.

Thus, from the collected efficacy of ſo many different cauſes, or rather from the diverſified effects of a ſingle cauſe, I mean *ignorance*, we are enabled to account for that mighty aſcendant which the clergy gained, during the dark ages, over all ranks of men. Nor will the philoſopher, from this view of things, be inclined to reproach the Romiſh clergy of theſe days, with any dangerous ſpirit of enterpriſe or ambition. The clergy of the reformed churches, had it then exiſted, would, with the ſame advantages, have arrived at the ſame degree of ſpiritual domination:—that it has not, is owing more to the general ſpread of knowledge among us, than to any ſuperiority over the ancient clergy, in point of humility or moderation.

It is therefore idle to affect to diſcover, in the profound policy of churchmen, the ſource of that exorbitant greatneſs at which they arrived in the middle ages. Nothing but religious prejudices of a moſt malignant kind could have ſo far blinded the reaſon of men, in this age of boaſted philoſophy, as to prevent them from diſcovering the true cauſe of this ſingular event. No deep-laid ſcheme of policy has yet been judged neceſſary to explain the formidable powers of the feudal Barons, the riſe and progreſs of the prerogative of Kings, with the triumph of the latter over the numerous and

and valuable privileges of the Nobles. In the inveſtigation of theſe important facts, we can exert a ſagacity, almoſt bordering on refinement, to mark the natural operation of circumſtances peculiar to the manners of the times: but, in accounting for the exaltation of the clergy in the ages of ignorance and barbariſm, we are unable to proceed without the aſſiſtance of a plot, in which the contrivance and ſucceſs are equally inconceivable. Yet, were the reality of this imaginary plot allowed, nothing would be gained; for it will require all the credulity, even of the middle ages, to believe that a body of men, deſtitute of an armed force, ſhould, by mere dint of political dexterity, wreſt from monarchs a conſiderable part of their juriſdiction, and aſſert to themſelves an abſolute independence on them. Nothing but the blindeſt and moſt vulgar bigotry can liſten with patience to ſuch viſionary theories.

It has frequently been objected to the Romiſh clergy, that its ambition is ſuch as to aſpire openly to an independence on the ſtate, to diſclaim the obligation of the laws, and refuſe to contribute towards the exigencies of government.—I anſwer. If the Romiſh clergy has not declined the advantages which were offered to it; if it has not cenſured the laws of Juſtinian and other princes, as too favourable to churchmen; and if it has not

always preferred the public good to the intereſt of its own order; it only follows, that it is like other men, or other bodies of men. A deſire to obtain particular advantages to ourſelves, is ſo natural to the mind of man, that its effects muſt be ſtrongly felt in every ſociety; and wherever numerous bodies of men are collected into diſtinct claſſes, whoſe common intereſt may be affected by particular laws and regulations, it has been found, that ſuch claſſes of men have in all ages been active in trying to obtain peculiar privileges to their own order, at the expence of all others in the community. The ſame page of hiſtory that records the multiplied exemptions of Romiſh eccleſiaſtics, has alſo recorded the indiſcriminate facility of kings and nobles in granting them. Could it be expected that, when princes were weak enough to ſuffer the clergy to withdraw themſelves from their temporal juriſdiction, and even to add the ſanction of law to ſuch immunity, the latter would be too diſintereſted to embrace ſo flattering a diſtinction? Men in general are nothing leſs than philoſophers: they may applaud in theory the virtues of moderation and contentment; yet a regard for theſe will have little influence on their conduct, and will ſeldom reſtrain them from the purſuit of any conſiderable advantage. I ſpeak of mankind at large, not of its individuals,

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The enormous guilt therefore of the Romiſh clergy, in extending the authority of the ſpiritual courts beyond due bounds, amounts to no more than that the churchmen of that time did exactly what any other body of men would have done in the ſame circumſtances: they only gathered the ſpontaneous fruits of the ignorance and ſuperſtition of the age. Had they excited wars, extinguiſhed letters, or propagated that barbariſm which overſpread the face of Europe, they might with ſome colour of juſtice be reproached with the conſequences of thoſe evils: but he who is not an entire ſtranger to candour, will readily allow, that the clergy were the only people who either poſſeſſed themſelves any degree of civility, or who endeavoured to diffuſe it among others. It may then without prejudice be affirmed, that a Proteſtant clergy would have been equally ambitious, with the ſame motives to inſpire, and the ſame advantages to ſtimulate its ambition.

In the hiſtory of the reformed churches, I do not find the clergy to have been more moderate, whatever compliments it may have received from the partiality of friends for the merit of diſtinguiſhed moderation *. The eccleſiaſtical commiſſion,

* Judge Blackſtone has laviſhed very warm, but not very appropriate, praiſe on the conduct of the eſtabliſhed clergy. His panegyric diſplays no uncommon or peculiar excellence,

miſſion, the right of ſanctuary, the extenſion of prohibited degrees, and every abuſe of the ancient eſtabliſhment, might have remained to this day, if the removal of theſe had depended on the diſintereſtedneſs of the Proteſtant clergy. What was it but the clamour of this body which prevented the ſuppreſſion of aſylums till the reign of James I?* What other cauſe but this, obſtructed the removal of many eccleſiaſtical abuſes which have ſurvived the ancient hierarchy? To form an idea of the *moderate ambition* of a Proteſtant clergy, we need only to obſerve what that moderation was, under the reign of Charles I. and the primacy of Archbiſhop Laud. A learned hiſtorian † informs us, that "while the Prelates were ſo liberal in raiſing "the Crown at the expence of public liberty, "they made no ſcruple of encroaching themſelves "on the royal rights the moſt inconteſtable, in "order to exalt the hierarchy, and procure to "their

which either is not, or may not be, poſſeſſed by others, except one, "that they pride themſelves in nothing more juſtly, than "in being true members of the Church, emphatically *by law* "eſtabliſhed."

* Pegge's Account of the Right of Sanctuary, Art. I. Archæologia, Vol. VIII. 1787.

† Hume, Vol. VI. p. 293, and p. 88, ſpeaking of the conduct of the Scotch miniſters, ſays, "Scarcely during the darkeſt "night of Papal ſuperſtition, are there found ſuch inſtances "of prieſtly encroachments, as the annals of Scotland preſent "to us during that period."

" their own order dominion and independence. " All the doctrines which the Romiſh Church " had borrowed from ſome of the Fathers, and " which freed the ſpiritual from ſubordination to " the civil power, were now adopted by the Church, " and interwoven with her political and religious " tenets." The proceedings of the General Aſſembly in Scotland, about the ſame time, and the bold pretenſions of its miniſters to independence on their Prince, ſhow that ambition is not the infirmity of Popiſh clergymen alone †. It is true, the latter have attained to a greater degree of power than the Proteſtant churchmen have yet arrived at. This however is not a proof that the ambition of Popiſh eccleſiaſtics was greater, but that the enterpriſes of a Proteſtant clergy have been leſs ſucceſsful.

Where the nature and end of government are well underſtood, where the operations of that government are directed with a ſtrong hand, and where the church is confined within the limits appointed by its founder, there the clergy, whatever be its religion, will be compelled to yield obedience; and, whatever its ambition, will be never able to invade the prerogative of kings. Even they who proclaim loudeſt the encroachments of the

† This is evident from almoſt every page of a work of King Charles I. ſtill extant, and entitled, *A large Declaration concerning the late Tumults in Scotland.* 1639.

the Popiſh clergy, cannot deny it to have been uniformly obedient to their temporal rulers, through a ſucceſſion of ſeveral ages. The Greek Prelates, while they profeſſed the religion of Rome, ſeem never to have attempted any thing againſt the civil juriſdiction of the Emperors *. Nor did ſuch attempts occur to the Weſtern eccleſiaſtics till about the tenth century. Then, indeed, the feeble government of princes, the ignorance of the laity, and conſequently its incompetence to preſcribe any uſeful or rational forms of juſtice, with the advantage which the clergy enjoyed, of poſſeſſing a more perfect ſyſtem of juriſprudence than was known in the lay courts, all concurred to extend the limits of eccleſiaſtical juriſdiction. By obſerving the wiſdom and equity of the deciſions in the ſpiritual courts, men began to perceive the neceſſity of deſerting the martial tribunals of the barons, and of recurring to the former, till the latter were amended. Even through the darkneſs of that period, men were able to ſee how abſurd were the judicial proceedings of a feudal ſovereign, by which force and chance were made arbiters of right and wrong, of truth and falſehood; and by which the error or iniquity of a ſentence was left irremediable, being ſubject to the review of no ſuperior court †.

Over

* Puckeridge, Biſhop of Rocheſter, b. i. c. 8. p. 170, of his Apology for Barclay. Fleuri, Diſcours 7me ſur l'Hiſtoire Eccléſiaſtique, n. 15.

† It is ſurpriſing that Dr. Robertſon, who pourtrays in theſe diſguſting colours his picture of feudal law, and who contraſts with

Over ſuch a rival, the eccleſiaſtical law gained an eaſy triumph. The people could not heſitate to whom they ſhould have recourſe for advice, and to whom they ſhould look up for deciſion, in any intricate or important concern. When the end of a judicial court was not at all, or but imperfectly fulfilled by the ill-digeſted regulations of illiterate princes, who can wonder if the community turned from them with diſguſt, to the more rational inſtitutes of eccleſiaſtical law?

To account for this general partiality of the public in favour of the courts and legal determinations of churchmen, it is unneceſſary to impute to the latter either extraordinary ambition or policy. The hiſtory of the manners and civil ſociety which prevailed in that age throughout Europe, will beſt explain this phenomenon. Let us then, inſtead of inveighing againſt the encroachments of ambitious churchmen, rather lament the calamity of the times when princes knew only how to command armies, ignorant of the ſcience of legiſlation and government, and ſcarcely acquainted with the firſt principles of political union *. I am ſenſible this opinion

with it the ſuperior excellence of the canon law, could not account for the univerſal prevalence of the latter during the dark ages, without the chimerical fiction of a plot, in which all churchmen, with the Pope at their head, conſpired againſt the State.

* "The independent juriſdiction of the Latin clergy was "the fruit of time, accident, and of their own induſtry," ſays Mr. Gibbon, c. xx.

opinion will appear very different from that which* many have maintained on the ſubject; yet I feel myſelf ſtrongly confirmed in it by the ſupport of two writers of the firſt eminence†, who obſerve that the aggrandiſement of the church aroſe from the circumſtances, not the religion of the times, and more from the efficacy of political cauſes, than from the influence of religious opinions.

Lofty ideas and arbitrary doctrines of Roman Catholics on the ſubject of government.

The greater part of the charges againſt Roman Catholics, reviewed in theſe pages, is ſuch that men of every perſuaſion muſt neceſſarily plead guilty to them. The ambition of Romiſh clergymen, the intolerance of Popiſh princes, and the general diſloyalty of Papiſts, have long been the hackneyed themes of Proteſtant declamation and invective. Leſs partiality, and more candour, would teach the dupes of ſuch vulgar prejudices, that all men are ambitious, all princes have been intolerant, and that all religioniſts have been diſloyal. Little ſurely is gained by proving that men of all religions are ſubject to human paſſions and infirmities; and narrow is the temper of that mind which, from ſuch infirmities, preſumes to argue

* Abbé Raynal, Doctor Robertſon, and Judge Blackſtone.

† Hume's Hiſtory, Vol. I. p. 330. Gibbon, Vol. VI. p. 110.

argue againſt the nature and tendency of any particular religion.

I confeſs then that many Catholic divines have entertained lofty ideas, and have delivered arbibitrary doctrines, on the ſubject of government: ſo alſo have the divines of the Church of England, and of other reformed Churches. That Papiſts have maintained ſometimes ſlaviſh, and at other times extravagantly popular and ſeditious tenets concerning the relative duties of kings and ſubjects, wants no proof in a land where every tale of Popiſh unprincipledneſs is eagerly liſtened to, and fondly believed. But then is it the Papiſt only who has felt the goad of ambition? has he alone thrown down the fences of liberty? or has he only betrayed a rude contempt of lawful authority?—They were not Catholics who flattered the two firſt of the Stuarts by exaggerated details of kingly power, who ſhed the blood of Sidney and of Ruſſel, and who canonized the degrading doctrines of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance. Nor were they Catholics, who, in the laſt century, ſubverted the conſtitution of England; who, impatient of the reſtraints of law, indulged a ſpirit of wild and uncontrolled licentiouſneſs. Nor do I recollect that Catholics, in whatever age they firſt became known, aſſailed the thrones of Princes, under the pretence of pious zeal, or that they propagated their creed by war and bloodſhed. A revolution,

volution, or a *reformation*, in religion, enforced by tumult and rebellion, is not without precedent: but that precedent will not be found in the hiſtory of the origin of Popery.

It is ſtrange that, in this liberal age and country, the dominion of religious prejudice ſhould be ſo ſtrong as to make us attribute thoſe effects to the religion of Papiſts, which, when others are concerned, we more kindly attribute to the violence of their paſſions. When we hear of Proteſtant ſubjects who have dethroned their ſovereigns, or of Proteſtant princes who have enſlaved their people, we are diligently cautioned not to infer that tyranny or rebellion is encouraged by the tenets of Proteſtantiſm, but that ſuch crimes ariſe from that weakneſs and depravity which are common to Catholics no leſs than to Proteſtants. This, it muſt be owned, is a very ſatisfactory plea. But why is the poor Papiſt excluded from the advantage of it? Has he no trials to encounter, no weakneſſes to ſurmount? Are Papiſts alone ſuch exact obſervers of moral duty, as never to diſregard the admonitions of their religion? Muſt the religion of the latter be anſwerable for every folly and every crime, while that of Proteſtants may be exculpated by alleging the well-known perverſity of mankind?—It is hard to ſay on this occaſion, whether the injuſtice or the inconſiſtency be moſt remarkable.

But

But what are the lofty ideas of Roman Catholics on the ſubject of government?—They are the long-exploded opinions of *ſome* Catholic ſchoolmen and canoniſts; the ſubordination of the civil to the ſpiritual juriſdiction; the depoſing power of the Pope, and conſequently the open avowal of an authority independent of, and ſuperior to, the magiſtrate. It is true theſe opinions were formerly maintained by ſome individuals, never by the whole body of Roman Catholics. We can trace their riſe and progreſs, and at laſt their decline. They were never conſidered as terms of Catholic communion; and, though ſupported by great numbers, were rejected by many, whoſe orthodoxy is unimpeached. Modern writers, I know, among the Reformed, have exerted all their ingenuity and eloquence to perſuade us that the above-mentioned opinions were as univerſally ſubſcribed by all Catholics from the eleventh century to the Reformation, as the dogmas of tranſubſtantiation or Papal ſupremacy. Of ſuch writers, the views are too intereſted and ſuſpicious to obtain an immediate, unreſerved aſſent. It is eaſy to diſcover the reaſons by which Proteſtants are led to place in the moſt contemptible light, the ſtate of learning and religion in Europe, in the ages prior to the ſixteenth century. In proportion as they exaggerate the ignorance, the immorality and ſuperſtition of the Weſtern world under a Popiſh eſtabliſhment, they fondly hope to excite the gratitude of mankind for the

bleſſings

bleſſings of ſcience, morality, and religion, diffuſed by the Reformation.

But let it not be imagined, whatever were the benefits derived from the Reformation, that the people of Europe wanted its propitious light to diſcern the principles of an equal well-conſtituted government. Europe had been long acquainted with the profeſſion and practice of Popery, before it had occaſion to complain of the ambition of its prelates, or the encroachments of Rome. During that period, the independence of ſovereigns, and the ſubmiſſion of churchmen to their princes, were acknowledged and enforced. To what cauſes the church owed its ſubſequent aggrandiſement, and its miniſters their extenſive immunities, has been explained above. That however in every age, from the eleventh to the ſixteenth century, the rights of princes were avowed and defended, in oppoſition to Papal pretenſions, appears to be evident from the following conſiderations.

A very reſpectable oppoſition was made to the depoſing doctrine, from the firſt appearance of it under the pontificate of Gregory VII, till the laſt uſe made of it by Clement VIII, and that through the moſt triumphant period of papal domination. I aſſert this the more confidently, becauſe it is what has been confeſſed by a learned Prelate of the Church of England, notwithſtanding all the pre-

poſſeſſion

poſſeſſion of the times in which he lived againſt Papiſts*. In all the diſputes between Rome and the Empire, there were never wanting numerous friends to the latter, who reproached the Pontifs with their uſurped greatneſs, and who contraſted their eagerneſs "to riſe to that bad eminence," with the unambitious conduct of their predeceſſors. In England, the graſping policy of Rome was frequently withſtood, and might always have been withſtood, had not our weak, impolitic princes often purchaſed the intereſt of the Pontif, by the ſacrifice of their prerogative, and of the national independence†. Whoever is converſant in our hiſtory, muſt be ſenſible of the truth of this remark. The united evidence of parliamentary records and ancient hiſtories, confirms it in the

* Book I. c. viii. of Biſhop Puckeridge's Defence of Barclay. Alſo Fra. Paolo, a name dear to Proteſtants, in his *Defence of Gerſon*, London, 1607, fol. 89, b. ſays of the Popes having depoſed Princes: "It hath not been uſed before "the year of grace one thouſand; and after it hath been put "in practice by the Biſhops of Rome, due reſiſtance hath "always been made, whenſoever they abuſed their lawful "power . . . . the reſiſtance which Philip the Fair made to "Boniface VIII, and Lewis XII. to Julius, like to that "which this commonwealth [Venice] doth uſe at this preſent, "is well commended by Richeome [a Jeſuit]."

† Mat. Paris ad an. 1246, relates a ſingular inſtance of this impolicy in Henry III; and Cotton's Abridgment, 47 and 50 of Edward III, contains remarkable inſtances of a ſimilar weakneſs even in that politic and magnanimous Prince.

moſt ſatisfactory manner. In the hiſtory of France, not a few inſtances may be traced of the intruſive interference of Popes in civil matters. This remark applies with equal truth to the hiſtory of Spain, and of the republic of Venice: yet we are aſſured by an author, whoſe name and veracity are highly reſpected in England, that neither the Venetians, the French, nor Spaniards, have ever acknowledged the pretenſions of the Roman Pontifs to temporal dominion*. We are not, therefore, authoriſed from particular acts of papal uſurpation, exhibited in England or in other countries, to infer the acquieſcence of thoſe countries in the general doctrines on which ſuch uſurpations were founded. Moſt of the canoniſts, ſome ſchoolmen, and thoſe of the clergy who were led by intereſted views to exalt the prerogative of Rome, contended for the temporal and depoſing power of its biſhops; but, by great numbers of civilians and ſcholaſtics, and by all princes with their nobles, that power was denied†. It could not then be conſidered as an

* Hiſtoire des Différens entre Paul V. & la République de Veniſe, par Fra. Paolo, p. 46, 111, 127, 225. Dr. Bois, Deap of Canterbury, under James I, has theſe words in one of his ſermons: "This intruſion on the things of Cæſar is thought "unjuſt and uncouth even by the Sorbonne and parliament of "Paris, in France, by the commonwealth of Venice, by the "ſeminary Prieſts in England."—Sermon on the 23d Sunday after Trinity.

† Biſhop Puckeridge, in the chapter above cited.

an eſſential article of the Popiſh creed. If the belief of the depoſing doctrine be not an article of Roman Catholic faith, nor a neceſſary condition of communion with Papiſts, as it evidently is not, with what juſtice is their *religion* ſaid to preſcribe to all its profeſſors a tenet ſo hoſtile to the ſovereignty of kings, and the independence of nations? The *faith* of Rome is widely different from the *policy* of Rome, from the fancies of her ſchoolmen, or the adulation of her canoniſts: theſe may be arraigned; the former cannot. The Church of Rome is not more reſponſible for the courtly doctrines of Bellarmine and other dependents, than the Kirk of Scotland is for the fanaticiſm of John Knox, or the Church of England for the extravagancies of thoſe among her divines, who, in the laſt century, aſſerted the divine right of kings.

That the Biſhop of Rome therefore is conſtituted, by divine appointment, Lord of the kings of the earth, is ſo far from being univerſally believed by Papiſts, that it is not even a commonly received opinion among them. When the name and authority of a Roman Pontif were viewed with far greater reverence than in the preſent age, then, in this country, and in their expiring moments, did Romiſh clergymen proteſt their readineſs to repel any invaſion, though undertaken by the Pope, againſt this kingdom. Pius V. excommunicated, and attempted to depoſe, Queen Elizabeth: yet,

of one hundred and twenty-four prieſts who were executed in her reign, not one denied, and few there were who did not openly confeſs, the legality of her title to the crown*; ſo ineffectual, at that time, were papal bulls to withdraw Catholic ſubjects from their allegiance, and to transfer it to a Pope. To confirm the truth of what is here advanced, it is ſurely unneceſſary to obſerve, that the oath impoſed on Papiſts by 18 Geo. III, which diſavows all temporal power of Pius VI, has been cheerfully ſubſcribed by every Catholic throughout this kingdom.

It is a favourite idea of many Proteſtant writers, that Popery and arbitary power are inſeparably connected together; that Popery never fails to extinguiſh the ſpirit of liberty, and to rivet on its profeſſors the chains of political, as well as of religious bondage. They who wiſh to propagate this unfounded opinion, do not reflect that the Roman Catholic was the religion of Europe, when the prerogative of ſovereigns was the moſt limited, when

* Memoirs of Miſſionary Prieſts, printed in 1741, collected from authentic records, manuſcripts, relations of eye-witneſſes, &c.—See the Preface and Introduction, p. 10. The editor of *Jenſon's Narrative*, in Oates's Plot, printed in 1679, ſpeaking of the popiſh ſecular clergy, p. 8, ſays, "They perſuaded "thoſe here in England, of their own ſect and profeſſion, to "quiet ſubjection, fealty, and allegiance, in the days of "Queen Elizabeth."

when the free conſtitution of our Saxon anceſtors was in full vigour, and *Magna Charta* was wreſted by Popiſh Barons from a daſtardly tyrant. The cities of Italy, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, profeſſed the religion of Rome, when they contended with the Empire for their liberties; and when, notwithſtanding a powerful oppoſition, they at laſt obtained them. The States of Swiſſerland, during the two hundred years preceding the Reformation, enjoyed a freedom of government which Proteſtantiſm has not improved in thoſe cantons wherein it has been ſince eſtabliſhed. The Roman Catholic ſubjects of Philip II, in the Netherlands, were not leſs impatient of ſervitude, nor leſs active in reſiſting it, than the free ſpirits of Calviniſm*. The late outcry of the French againſt arbitrary power has not been ſilenced, nor have their exertions in the cauſe of liberty been reſtrained, by the voice of Popery; and if the conduct of the French clergy, on this occaſion, be compared with that of our churchmen at the Revolution, I believe the former will not be found to ſuffer by the compariſon. If any credit therefore be given to the hiſtory of paſt ages, it will appear that Catholics are not leſs friends to liberty, and have not leſs diſtinguiſhed themſelves in that glorious cauſe, than the patriots of the Reformation. In the days of Popery, Tyler and Cade

 delivered,

* Recueil de pluſieurs extraits tirés des traités, &c. fait ſur la copie à Munſter.

delivered, in rude and violent language, the ſame popular ſentiments which have been ſince recommended by the ſmoother eloquence of Milton and Locke. However great might be the darkneſs that overſpread Europe, yet men were not to wait for the dawn of Proteſtantiſm, to teach them the rights of ſubjects, the lawfulneſs of reſiſtance, and the value of a free government. Theſe points were not indeed ſo deeply inveſtigated, nor ſo ably ſupported, as they have been ſince that period: yet, before the Reformation, Papiſts enjoyed common ſenſe; and this was ſufficient to teach them that all power originates from the people; that it is a truſt committed to the magiſtrate for the benefit of the community; and, when perverted to its detriment, may be revoked by it, and modified anew. Of theſe principles, our Catholic anceſtors might know without much reaſoning, and feel the truth, though they were unable to illuſtrate them with the perſpicuity and force of modern compoſition*,

When

* "To whom do we owe *Magna Charta*, but to our Popiſh "Barons, long before the Reformation? And were there not "as many and as frequent ſtruggles in thoſe Catholic times as "ſince?"—*Lord Lanſdown's ſpeech on the bill againſt occaſional conformity*, 1719. The ſame teſtimony appears in the ſpeech of Mr. Lechmere, one of the managers againſt Dr. Sacheverel, and is admitted by Sir Simon Harcourt, in his reply to the managers.—See *Dr. Sacheverel's Trial*, p. 34—185.

When we take a comprehenſive view of both the religion and policy of Roman Catholic States; when we find the former as ſilent as the thirty-nine articles are on the ſubject of civil government; and when we ſee Catholics, like Proteſtant ſubjects, live, ſome under a limited, others under an abſolute conſtitution; we do not eaſily conceive upon what grounds their religion has been judged more friendly to ſlavery, than that of Proteſtants. They who are loudeſt in the cry againſt Popery and arbitrary power, are ſilent as to the proofs by which an accuſation ſo odious ought to be ſupported. But the arguments of controvertiſts, it ſhould be remembered, are often leſs apt to afford conviction, than to inſtill prejudice into the mind; not ſo much calculated to ſatisfy the reaſon of the philoſopher, as to inflame the paſſions of the vulgar. He who would appreciate the arguments of Proteſtant polemics againſt Popery, would probably find thoſe to be moſt frequently urged, of which the whole force conſiſts in calling Roman Catholics idolaters, ſlaves, and, above all, *Papiſts*. The application of this laſt term of reproach, is ſingularly uſeful to conciliate belief to the moſt monſtrous abſurdity, or the moſt abſurd calumny. Let a man be called a Papiſt, and no evidence will be required to convict him of bigotry, ſuperſtition, or idolatry. This devoted and execrated name implies all theſe, and indeed every other quality that can excite the pity, or provoke the ſcorn, of a

Proteſtant. While the idea of a Papiſt is ſuch with the multitude, little learning or ingenuity is requiſite to ſubſtantiate any charge againſt him, however improbable or chimerical. That mind which can digeſt the belief of Popiſh idolatry and faithleſſneſs to heretics, will ſwallow eagerly this article of Proteſtant orthodoxy, "that all Papiſts "are ſlaves."

Yet were we to ſuppoſe, what is not true, that Roman Catholic canons, ſermons, and univerſities, had ſanctioned with their united ſuffrages the doctrine of unconditional ſubmiſſion, ſtill I maintain it, Popery ought not to be thought more friendly to deſpotic government than the eſtabliſhed religion of England. From all the above-mentioned authorities, it was proved to demonſtration, on the trial of Dr. Sacheverel, by the Doctor's counſel, that abſolute, unreſiſting ſubmiſſion, had been the doctrine of the Church of England*. Her ſons may indeed fritter away by ingenious explanations, the tenets of ancient orthodoxy, and may piouſly attempt to extenuate the errors, or palliate the exceſſes, of a fond parent; but it is in vain, "while homilies and "articles, while ſo many archbiſhops and biſhops "and the univerſity, all aſſert the doctrine of "non-

* Sacheverel's Trial, (ſixth day).

"non-reſiſtance to the ſupreme power*." Proteſtantiſm, it ſeems, had been the religion of Engliſhmen above a century before it gave them that liberty which ſome writers, doubtleſs preſuming on our ignorance or our credulity, would have us believe is excluſively the fair and genuine offspring of *Reformation*. Indeed we were ſo far from taſting more abundantly the ſweets of liberty under our Proteſtant governors, that, were the hiſtorian called on to fix the period of Engliſh hiſtory the leaſt propitious to freedom, he would moſt aſſuredly name the reigns immediately ſucceeding the Reformation. The deſpotiſm of our government under Elizabeth, is well known; and, under the milder ſway of her royal brother, Edward, ſlavery in all its horrors was legally eſtabliſhed throughout England, as the ſtate to which all vagrants were to be reduced†.

Such are the inſtances, ſtill on record, of the free genius of Proteſtantiſm. I am aware the *glorious Revolution* will be pointed to with triumph, as an atonement for all the attempts ever made by our Proteſtant kings againſt the rights of the people. While I wiſh not to leſſen the importance, or undervalue the bleſſings, of that great event,

* Lord Haverſham's ſpeech on the firſt article of the impeachment of Dr. Sacheverel. Alſo Mrs. Macaulay's Hiſtory of England, Let. I. p. 4.

† 1 Edward VI. c. 3.

event, I cannot help obſerving, that it was certainly cauſed by an abhorrence rather of Popery than of deſpotiſm; more by an apprehenſion for the eſtabliſhment, than for the conſtitution; in ſhort, that it was the effect of more bigotry than patriotiſm. The Revolution however was a moſt diſtinguiſhed benefit to the people of England, although the motives by which they were led who conducted it, might have been more pure, more liberal, and conſequently more honourable*. The Revolution is commonly deſcribed to be *a miraculous deliverance of the nation from Popery and arbitrary power*†. But who will believe the Revolution was miraculous, who has learned that James, the ſole ſupport of Popery and arbitrary power, was deſerted by his army and fleet, and that the whole force of both was at the diſpoſal of his enemy?

Nec Deus interſit, niſi dignus vindice nodus.

That this kingdom was delivered by the *miraculous* revolution from Popery and arbitrary power, is true; but that Popery and arbitrary power are the ſame, or that they are inſeparably united, notwithſtanding

* The Prince of Orange, in his *declaration*, inſiſted more forcibly on the danger of the Proteſtant religion than of the government. He well knew the effect of religious prejudices was greater than of political impreſſions.—See Art. i.

† Proclamation of Lords and Commons, February 13, 1688-9.

withſtanding the high authority that inſinuates it, is a miſtake. Yet this popular error, the reverend and right reverend preachers of anniverſary ſermons have not failed to promote with all the ardour of intereſted eloquence. Theſe pious and venerable fathers of the church may poſſibly take ſcandal at a raſh, unguarded aſſertion of Sir William Blackſtone*, in his Commentaries, "that, "by the Revolution, our conſtitution has only "been regenerated, as it were, and re-eſtabliſhed "on the principles of our Popiſh Saxon anceſ-"tors." If there be any truth in this remark, a remark certainly not ſuggeſted by the partiality of Sir William to Roman Catholics, it ſhould ſeem that Popery and liberty are not leſs conſiſtent nor leſs compatible with each other, than Popery and arbitrary power.

There was a time when the prejudice of our countrymen was not indeed leſs violent, but entirely different, if not entirely contrary to that which at preſent operates againſt Roman Catholics. Whoever reads the Engliſh divines of the laſt century, will find them uniformly agreeing in theſe points: that Papiſts maintained the doctrine of reſiſtance; that their ſchoolmen placed the origin of all power in the people; and that the Puritan writers againſt paſſive obedience, borrowed their arguments

* Vol. IV. p. 420.

arguments from Parſons and other Popiſh authors*. The aſſociation therefore of two ideas ſo little agreeing, as thoſe of Popery and arbitrary power, would probably have never been made, if a regard to exact truth had been conſidered, rather than animoſity againſt an obnoxious and proſcribed ſect. It is not however my deſign to contraſt the bold and ſpirited poſitions of Roman Catholics with the meek, paſſive theology of Engliſh Proteſtants, or to exalt the religion of Rome above that of England. I believe Chriſtianity in general to be the friend of Liberty; nor have any of its numerous and diſcordant creeds yet preſumed to cenſure the honour paid univerſally to this benificent deity. All that I wiſh to prove, for to perſuade is another thing, is that Roman Catholics are, neither from principle nor inclination, more enamoured, or even more patient of arbitrary power, than Proteſtants. It is true that many nations, whoſe religion is Roman Catholic, at this day groan under the yoke of deſpotiſm. But, from this circumſtance, to infer that deſpotiſm is the effect of the Romiſh religion, is ſhameful

* This is evident from the *Hiſtory of Paſſive Obedience from the Reformation*, 1689.—See the Preface, and p. 29, 39, 55, 63, 124. Alſo the Archbiſhop of Spalatro de Repub. Eccleſiaſticâ, L. vi. c. 2. n. xix. Dr. Holden, an eminent Catholic divine, and author of *Analyſis Fidei*, warmly ſupports the original contract between the people and magiſtrate, "*poſt alios quamplurimos ſcriptores.*" L. ii. c. 9.

ful bigotry. Pruſſia, Denmark, and Sweden, are not free governments; nor was England free till more than a century after the introduction of the Reformation. If, therefore, there be a neceſſary connexion between the policy and religion of States, what becomes of the credit of Proteſtantiſm, for ever extolled as the guardian of civil, no leſs than of religious liberty? Why was freedom not introduced into this country, together with the Reformation? at leaſt, why was the ſeverity of a Popiſh government not ſoftened by the mildneſs of ſucceeding Proteſtantiſm, inſtead of being exaſperated as it was, and inflamed to unmitigated deſpotiſm?

Diſloyalty of Catholic ſubjects, and diſaffection to a Proteſtant government.

They who have obſerved the attachment of men, eſpecially of Catholics, to their religion, and who have learned from the polemics of the laſt century, that Papiſts have aſſerted the lawfulneſs of reſiſtance in practice, as well as theory, will, from theſe premiſes, confidently infer that Roman Catholics cannot be faithful ſubjects of a Proteſtant prince. Facts however afford a firmer ground for opinion than the moſt ingenious ſpeculations. Men of refinement frequently imagine connexions in nature which are contradicted by facts; and this happens eſpecially when theſe connexions are eſtabliſhed on partial views of the objects thus connected. It is this narrow,

contracted

contracted view of Popery, while it is beheld through the fallacious medium of controverſy, which leads the mind into a thouſand falſe combinations and inferences. Theſe, when appreciated by their conformity with hiſtory and experience, are ſoon found to vaniſh "like the "baſeleſs fabric of a viſion." To reſolve therefore, in a ſatisfactory manner, this important queſtion, whether Roman Catholics may be good ſubjects of a Proteſtant prince, the moſt obvious method is to inquire what has been the political conduct of the Roman Catholics of this country under their Proteſtant governors, from the time of the Reformation.

The only oppoſition which Henry found from his Catholic ſubjects, was that of the northern counties for the reſtoration of monaſteries. Though it be allowed that the ſuppreſſion of theſe houſes was productive of general advantage to the State; yet, in conſequence of that meaſure, great temporary evil, and much partial inconvenience, were felt by individuals throughout the nation*. The hoſpitality of theſe communities was ſo extenſive, and the relief derived from them to the indigent ſo liberal, that, to many, theſe appear to have operated as a diſcouragement of public induſtry. The country enjoyed, from a neighbouring convent,

* Hume, Vol. IV. p. 326, 7.

vent, all the benefit of an opulent family residing on its estate, and letting its lands to the tenant at a rent extremely reasonable. The nobility and gentry, by whose ancestors many of the houses had been founded, possessed some considerable privileges, and also emoluments, arising from these establishments. The suppression of monasteries must have affected in a certain degree the immediate and actual interests of all orders of men, and could not fail to excite among them a general dissatisfaction. By it, some of the insurgents were reduced to demand from government a home, others a subsistence*, of which they had been deprived; while others conceived themselves authorised to claim for their families the rights of their ancestors, which they saw wantonly violated by the undistinguished seizure of monastic property. They did not erect the standard of revolt against Henry for his rupture with Rome, or for his pretensions to the supremacy†, but for having unjustly sacrificed their property, their interests, in short, their civil and legal rights, to the avarice and rapacity of his courtiers. This was the real cause of the Northern insurrection‡; in which, it must

* According to Dr. Heylin, History of the Reformation, p. 261, 2, ten thousand persons were reduced to distress, by the final dissolution in 1538, and the following year.

† From Speed, p. 1016, it appears that the insurgents in Lincolnshire acknowledged Henry's supremacy.

‡ Ib. p. 1018, Speed calls religion the *pretence* of the Northern insurrection.

muſt be owned, the complaints of the ſufferers were ſuch as juſtified their clamorous importunity for a ſpeedy redreſs. It is true, their attempt to procure that redreſs was not conformable to the eſtabliſhed forms of law: but reaſon and humanity will always make a wide diſtinction between the turbulence of an ambitious rebel, and the reſentment of an incenſed, becauſe injured people.

In the reign of Edward, it is notorious that the diſturbances raiſed in the Weſt were owing more to civil than religious grievances. Mr. Hume has inveſtigated them with his wonted acuteneſs, in his hiſtory*, and detailed them at ſome length. Religion on that, as well as on other occaſions, was made ſubſervient to policy, and was employed to inflame the diſcontents of the multitude. When the inſurgents were in conſiderable force, and ſanguine in their expectations of ſucceſs, they added, to the liſt of their other grievances, the ſuppreſſion of ancient rites; yet their complaints were originally pointed againſt incloſures and againſt oppreſſions from the gentry. The reſtoration of Popery was not the cauſe nor the object of that inſurrection.

Whoever caſts an eye on the Statute-book, will readily perceive that the ſevereſt laws againſt Papiſts

* Vol. IV. p. 327, 8, Hiſtory of England.

piſts were enacted in the reign of Elizabeth; and, from this circumſtance, will be led to conclude that the behaviour of Papiſts, under that reign, muſt have been highly criminal to have exaſperated the government to ſuch unuſual violence. Let us then examine what was the conduct of the body of Roman Catholics, under the adminiſtration of Elizabeth. Notwithſtanding their power and numbers, both of which were formidable, they employed neither to diſturb the ſucceſſion of that Princeſs to the throne of England. The Popiſh biſhops complimented her on her acceſſion to the royal dignity; the nobility and people of that perſuaſion ſubmitted peaceably to her rule, and paid every mark of allegiance which could be expected from the moſt faithful and affectionate ſubjects. It may be ſaid, this obedient ſubmiſſion was only yielded during the ſhort interval which paſſed between the ſucceſſion of the Queen and the eſtabliſhment of Proteſtantiſm; that is, before ſhe avowed her partiality to the Reformed. This however is not true. The obedience of Papiſts to the government of a Proteſtant Princeſs, continued at leaſt ten years unqueſtioned and unſuſpected. I add, that it continued forty-four years; that is, during the long-extended period of Elizabeth's reign, without being once interrupted by the clamours of the Popiſh clergy, or once violated by the diſloyalty of the Catholic body. I ſhall not ſhrink from the moſt minute inquiry

into the conduct of Catholics, either in the rebellion of the North, the innumerable plots attributed to them by the credulity or malignity of Proteſtant hiſtorians, or in the conſpiracy of Babington. In none of theſe miſdemeanors was the body either of Catholic laity or clergy concerned. The individuals who acted in theſe ſcenes were diſcovered and puniſhed. On them, all the guilt of conſpiracy and rebellion ought to have reſted. By what new code, then, of juſtice, was it extended at that time to the whole race, as it has ſince been tranſmitted to the deſcendants of that race of Catholics?

Relatively to the Northern rebellion, though the two noble leaders in it were indeed Roman Catholics, yet it does not appear that they acted in concert with the body of Engliſh Catholics; that they were either encouraged or aſſiſted by them, or countenanced by their clergy. The truth is, that the remote as well as immediate cauſes of that inſurrection were unconnected with religion: they may be ſeen in our hiſtorians. On that occaſion the Catholics expreſſed an unfeigned affection for the Queen: they ſent to her the letters addreſſed to them by the rebels, and offered to employ both their lives and fortunes in her ſervice*. The bull of excommunication and depoſition iſſued by Pius V. againſt Elizabeth, produced

* Echard's Hiſtory of England, Vol. II. p. 339.

duced no alteration in the behaviour of her Catholic ſubjects. They ſtill continued to yield the tribute of civil allegiance to her government: and very many, both prieſts and laymen, acknowledged openly the juſtice of her title, while they were ſuffering from the cruelty of her laws for denying her ſpiritual ſupremacy. They therefore who have attributed the Northern rebellion to the impotent denunciations of Pius's bull, have betrayed equal ignorance of hiſtory and chronology; for, in fact, the Papal bull was not made public in England till after the rebellion of Lord Northumberland. This Nobleman and Lord Weſtmorland publiſhed a manifeſto. In it no notice was taken of Pius's bull; on the contrary, the Queen's title was admitted, which in the bull was denied. I conceive myſelf therefore authoriſed to aſſert, that the intemperate zeal of Pius cauſed nō abatement in the loyalty of Roman Catholics. The individuals of that communion began to think more freely and more juſtly concerning the indedependence of temporal princes.

If either inclination or ſenſe of duty had prompted the Engliſh Catholics to obey the Papal mandate, and to renounce their allegiance to their Sovereign, doubtleſs theſe diſpoſitions would have appeared in the year 1588, when, by a powerful diverſion, they might have diſtreſſed Elizabeth, and perplexed the counſels of her

miniſters. But the impartial teſtimony of Proteſtant hiſtorians has done juſtice to Catholics on this occaſion, and has affirmed that not one of that perſuaſion diſcovered any ſymptom of eagerneſs to join the enemies of his country. Surely the ſuppoſed attachment of Papiſts to Rome, and their diſaffection to heretical governors, would have been ſhown at a time when they were not only invited by opportunity, but encouraged by the proſpect of avenging the cruelty of a bloody perſecution.

It was generally believed, throughout the reign of Elizabeth, that the eſtabliſhment of Engliſh ſeminaries on the continent, was made with a view to inſtil into the minds of the Catholic youth, violent prejudices againſt the government of England, againſt the perſon of the Queen and her miniſters, as well as againſt the religion of their country*. The prevalence however of this opinion was not confined to that reign; it has continued to operate to the diſadvantage of Catholics, particularly clergymen, through a period of two hundred years. Hence that horror with which our laws view the character of a *Popiſh prieſt*; hence the ſeverity with which they arm the magiſtrate againſt him; and hence the ſanguinary ſtatute

* Letter of Sir Francis Walſingham, in Cabbala, p. 372. Preamble to 27 Eliz. Queen's proclamation, 1591.

ſtatute of 27 Eliz. That, of Catholics, the gentry and clergy receive their education in foreign countries, is not ſo much the effect of choice, as of neceſſity. The firſt of Elizabeth impoſes the oath of ſupremacy on all graduates in the two univerſities; it alſo deprives of both real and perſonal eſtate, thoſe who *teach* or *ſpeak* in favour of the Papal ſupremacy. The fifth of Elizabeth ſubjects the delinquent to the additional ſentence of a *præmunire*. The twenty-third of the ſame reign condemns to impriſonment for a year, any ſchoolmaſter who teaches contrary to the act; that is, who teaches the ſpiritual ſupremacy of the Biſhop of Rome. By theſe acts, aggravated farther by the rigour of royal proclamations, Catholics were diſabled from giving education to their youth. Thus circumſtanced, thus unable to educate his children at home, the poor oppreſſed Papiſt was neceſſitated to aſk from foreign States, that moral and literary inſtruction for his offspring, which was denied by his own country. Was it to be expected that the parent would obey a ſtatute which was an outrage on humanity, and which tended to draw upon his ſons a contempt of their ignorance, as well as a deteſtation of their religious principles? Heroic anceſtors of the preſent race of Catholics! I applaud that firmneſs, I admire that reſolution, which forbad you to reſpect an ordinance that itſelf reſpected not the higher authority of God and Nature. From the

time that the law againſt a foreign education in Popiſh ſeminaries was paſſed, till the preſent hour, when it ſtill remains an awful monument of the tyranny of princes and the ſervility of parliaments, Catholics have had the virtue to regard more the diſcharge of parental duties, than the terrors of legal injuſtice; and to brave, though at the riſk of their fortunes, all the vengeance of iniquity ſanctified and ſupported by law.

By a ſtrange mixture of inhumanity and abſurdity, Roman Catholics were driven from our univerſities; and, for repairing to others, were made obnoxious to the laws of their country. They who, for the purpoſe of education, entered into the ſchools eſtabliſhed within the dominions of Philip, were viewed by Elizabeth with little leſs jealouſy, or leſs terror, than the formidable *Armada* itſelf. Conformably to the dark, inſidious policy of Cecil, plots were pretended to be contrived and diſcovered, in which the ſtudents were repreſented to have ruſhed from their ſeminaries, prepared, either by the dagger or by poiſon, to aſſaſſinate Elizabeth and her miniſters. Indeed I can believe that theſe bore with indignant reluctance the violation of their religious rights, that they commiſerated with juſt and generous feeling the misfortunes of the captive Queen of Scots, and that many of their teachers were intoxicated with the wild notions of Papal prerogative. But, that,

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in return for the protection afforded by Philip, the ſeminariſts entertained views hoſtile to the peace and government of England; that they attempted themſelves, or encouraged others, to deſtroy Elizabeth with her miniſters; or that they countenanced either the invaſion in 1588, or any other meditated by the Pope, or the King of Spain;—all this, though affirmed at that time by many of their enemies, and repeated with confidence by two late hiſtorians*, is a groundleſs and malignant charge. They who are acquainted with the characters of Elizabeth and her ſervants, will be led to ſuſpect the juſtice of that accuſation, which reſts only on the veracity of ſuch witneſſes. Yet it is not by ſuch inſinuations, nor by the uncertainty of mere negative arguments, that the political innocence of the ſeminariſts is ſupported: †Parſons, Allen, and Fitzherbert, who all lived in the very period of Elizabeth's reign the moſt fruitful in conſpiracies, have vindicated the honour of Catholic loyalty, and repelled with becoming ſpirit the calumnies of Cecil and his retainers. If the writings of the above-mentioned authors were un-

* Hume, Vol. V. p. 283. M^lle Keralio, Vol. IV. p. 277, 8.

† Reſponſio ad edictum Elizabethæ, per Andream Philopatrum; that is, F. Parſons.—Apologia pro Seminariorum alumnis, by D. Allen, 1583.—Fitzherbert's *Defence of the Catholic Cauſe*, 1602; in which the reader will find a reply to all the general, as well as particular, aſperſions of Roman Catholics on political grounds.

known to certain late hiſtorians, the misfortune is that of the Catholics, and of truth: the public however ſhould be informed, that the numerous conſpiracies of Papiſts againſt Elizabeth, related by Proteſtant writers, and credited by Proteſtant readers, were denied and diſavowed by the Catholics of thoſe times; and that it is ungenerous to retail the convicted falſehoods of a bigoted chronicler*, as matters equally certain with the moſt authentic documents of hiſtory. In anſwer to the multiplied accounts of Popiſh plots againſt Elizabeth, I aſſert, excepting that of Babington, in which a few of the Catholic gentry were engaged, that not one is ſupported by ſuch evidence as ought to appear ſatisfactory to an unprejudiced mind.

Thoſe of Throcmorton, Parry, and Sommerville, or Sommerfield, however confidently related by Hume and Keralio, reſt on very ambiguous and inſufficient proofs. All the evidence of Throcmorton's plot is wholly built on his own confeſſion; a confeſſion extorted by the rack, retracted at his arraignment, repeated again on the proſpect of a pardon, and laſtly denied at his execution. Dr. Robertſon obſerves (indeed, who muſt

* Speed, without producing a ſingle authority, has filled twelve folio pages of his Chronicle with a narrative of Popiſh plots. It is the common ſtorehouſe for information on this ſubject.

muſt not obſerve it?) that the matter of Throckmorton's confeſſion appears extremely improbable*. In regard to Parry, it is doubtful whether he ever was a Roman Catholic. By the Catholic exiles in France, he was conſidered as an impoſtor, and as a man of no credit or principle. At his trial he retracted what he had before affirmed, concerning the Pope and Cardinals having hired him to become the aſſaſſin of Elizabeth. Camden and Echard inſinuate, that the plot of which Sommerville was accuſed, was the invention of Lord Leiceſter, and was commonly believed to be ſuch. The French Ambaſſador at the court of Elizabeth, in a letter, ſtill extant, to Henry III. of France, mentions the impriſonment of Sommerville for a conſpiracy againſt the Queen, and alſo the circumſtance of his having procured from Rome a diſpenſation to murder Elizabeth†. He treats it as a fiction, deviſed for the purpoſe of inflaming the prejudices of the people againſt the Pope and Engliſh Papiſts. Theſe three plots are recorded, with all their circumſtances of intricacy, by Proteſtant writers, and with all the ſerious ſolemnity of the moſt authentic hiſtory. If thoſe writers were acquainted with the facts

* Hiſtory of Scotland, Vol. II. p. 112.

† The letter is among the *Pièces Juſtificatives* in M^lle^ Keralio's fifth volume of her *Hiſtoire d'Eliſabeth Reine d'Angleterre*. 1787.

facts above ſtated, facts atteſted by thoſe who were living at the very time, it was uncandid, and even unjuſt, to ſuppreſs them. If they were ignorant of them, though their ignorance ſhould be excuſed, yet the bold, unſuſpecting confidence of their relation is reprehenſible. Is it preſumption to ſuppoſe that prejudice prevented them from diſcovering their uſual ſagacity and diſcernment, in favour of thoſe whom they had been taught to execrate and condemn? Reports were circulated, and thoſe reports have paſſed for inconteſtable, of three other attempts of Papiſts againſt the Queen, between the years 1592 and 1597. Beſides the general obſervations made above, concerning the numerous conſpiracies of Papiſts in the reign of Elizabeth, I have only this to ſay at preſent, that thoſe attempts were conſtantly diſavowed by the perſons who were accuſed of having been engaged in them.

With reſpect to Babington's plot, and the Gunpowder Treaſon in the following reign, I acknowledge the facts. They were Catholics who, together with Babington, meditated the reſcue of Queen Mary; and, if neceſſary to effect it, alſo the murder of Elizabeth. The conſpirators were about fourteen in number. Theſe were neither countenanced by other Catholics, nor connected with the body either of the clergy or laity, who remained wholly unconſcious of Babington's treaſon.

ſon. His aſſociates ſought, but without effect, to place ſome noblemen at the head of their confederacy. The clergy was ſo far from approving his treaſonable attempt, that the annaliſt of Elizabeth's reign has recorded a letter from the obnoxious ſeminariſts, in which they diſſuade the Catholics from diſturbing the peace of their country, and from employing force againſt the enemies of their religion. Mary's confinement was flagrantly unjuſt; and her misfortunes, during the long period of nineteen years, could not fail to excite the compaſſion of numerous friends. Theſe, the ſentiments of an imprudent generoſity, added to the force of ſympathy in religion, would naturally impel to liberate, if poſſible, the captive Queen, and to reſtore her to that liberty of which the violence of her adverſaries had deprived her. It is therefore unneceſſary to ſuppoſe that religion was the ſole cauſe of Babington's conſpiracy, or that this wicked attempt originated in a perſuaſion that it was lawful to aſſaſſinate Elizabeth for perſecution of the faith*.

The ſtill more atrocious deſign of a few Papiſts againſt King James and his parliament, though annually commemorated in deteſtation of Popery, cannot, without outraging reaſon and equity, be conſidered

* "La haine d'Eliſabeth pour Marie Stuart étoit la ſeule "cauſe des conſpirations qui menacèrent ſa vie."—M^lle Keralio, Vol. IV. p. 202.

conſidered as an inſtance of the diſloyalty of Catholics, and of their averſion to the government of a Proteſtant prince. Firſt, Becauſe, among the thirteen or fourteen conſpirators (which was the whole number), no names of the Catholic leaders have yet been found. The firſt Marquis, Earl, Viſcount, and Baron, beſides ſeveral other noblemen, were then Roman Catholics. Of theſe, not one, and of the clergy not one, was proved to be an aſſociate of that execrable combination. Of the general innocence of Catholics, with reſpect to the plot, James himſelf was thoroughly convinced: he avowed his ſentiments in favour of them, in his ſpeech to parliament, and in his proclamation. Secondly, Among the probable motives which have been aſſigned for that conſpiracy, I recollect not to have found this—that the Papiſts were impatient under a Proteſtant government, but under a *rigorous perſecution*, which they ſaw exerciſed with great ſeverity at the acceſſion of James. The Catholics betrayed no ſymptoms of diſaffection to the adminiſtration of Elizabeth, in the courſe of ſeveral years after ſhe had declared herſelf a Proteſtant. The ſame obſervation will apply to the three firſt years of her ſucceſſor.

All perſecution is an invaſion of the rights of conſcience. Where rights are invaded, there will follow oppoſition. This, according to the power of reſiſtance in the ſufferers, will be productive either

either of open hoſtility, or of the more ſilent arrangement of a plot. It is by theſe principles, which are founded on reaſon and experience, that we muſt account for the unnatural deſign of the conſpirators againſt James and his parliament. Before the death of Elizabeth, it is certain that Prince, who was not without apprehenſions about the ſucceſſion, made very flattering promiſes to the Roman Catholics in England, to ſecure their intereſt in his favour. How muſt theſe have been ſurpriſed at James's proclamation, in the very firſt year of his reign, againſt the miniſters of their religion! and how muſt they have been alarmed with the terrors of another oppreſſive and perſecuting reign!

Whoever compares the conduct of Proteſtant and Catholic ſubjects to their reſpective ſovereigns of a different religion, will, I am confident, entertain no unfavourable opinion of the fidelity of Roman Catholics. Irritated by penal ſtatutes, they may have diſturbed the government of Elizabeth and James: and have not Proteſtants diſturbed that of Queen Mary of England, of the two Marys of Scotland, and of Charles I, when they were treated with far leſs ſeverity than the Catholics were by Queen Elizabeth? I recollect no inſtance of Proteſtant loyalty comparable to that which Catholics diſplayed in the ſervice of Charles I. and II. Implacable and inexorable, then, muſt be

be the juſtice of that nation, which accepts not the fidelity of the whole body of Roman Catholics to the two Charles, as ample atonement for the demerits of a few individuals under Elizabeth and James.

Concluſion. I ſhall here conclude the ſubject of this Inquiry. In its progreſs, I have examined the moral doctrines of Papiſts, have conſidered their influence on mankind, and have appreciated both the political and moral effects of their religious ſyſtem. By many it will be thought that, to juſtify Roman Catholics, recourſe has been too frequently had to the inconcluſive argument of recrimination; the example of them who have done ill, being no exculpation of ſuch as imitate them. I anſwer:—When we hear the Church of England extolled beyond all others, whether Papal or Reformed; when we hear its conſtitution made the ſubject of unceaſing panegyric: to thoſe who admit this tranſcendent excellency of our eſtabliſhment, and yet condemn certain points in the Popiſh ſyſtem, as immoral and pernicious, it is natural to reply, by obſerving that theſe points have not at all times appeared cenſurable or inadmiſſible to the orthodox, immaculate Church of England. Indeed her claim to theſe honourable epithets, may poſſibly be queſtioned by many; but all, I truſt, will confeſs the injuſtice of Proteſtants perſecuting in Roman Catholics ſuch opinions as were once thoſe

of

of a Proteſtant eſtabliſhed church. Lofty ideas of government, diſcouragement of free inquiry, with the doctrine of excluſive ſalvation, are among the heavieſt charges that are laid to the account of Papiſts. Now, although the precedent of our national church, where theſe ſentiments were once familiar, be not ſufficient to confirm their truth, yet might it be expected to procure, at leaſt in this nation, a toleration for thoſe who now adopt, or rather, who now are ſaid to adopt them.

To him who writes neither from intereſted nor oſtentatious views, but ſolely from a deſire of imparting that conviction to others which he feels in his own boſom, it is natural to look with ſome degree of anxiety towards the object which firſt induced him to addreſs the public. Under this impreſſion, when I weigh in my mind the effect of this inquiry, and the credit it will probably obtain with its readers, I own I feel no pleaſing anticipation of ſucceſs; no ſecurity of applauſe; no confidence of ſubduing inveterate prejudice, or of extinguiſhing religious animoſity. Whatever be the glory of Engliſhmen, ariſing from their ſuperiority in arts and arms, it is not heightened by the praiſe of ſuperior liberality towards religious diſſenters. While the Princes of Auſtria atone for the intolerance of their anceſtors; while France, by adopting an enlarged and generous policy towards the Hugonots, redeems the bigotry of former ages;

while

while Rome diſcourages, and Spain and Sicily have diſarmed, the Inquiſition; Great-Britain, when challenged to ſhow her contribution to the common ſtock of tolerating merit—what has ſhe to boaſt?—The act of 1778, by which one or two penal laws, out of many ſtill remaining, were repealed; but in ſo ungraceful a manner, as proves that our countrymen are better acquainted with the theory than the practice of toleration. At this time, when Roman Catholics ſtate their grievances, and ſupplicate a redreſs of them, they are anſwered by angry reproaches and bitter accuſations. The detail of theſe has been conſidered in the courſe of theſe pages. And if, from this conſideration of them, it appear that *the body of Engliſh Catholics*, neither at this day, nor in any former period, have maintained thoſe principles which can alone juſtify the penalties enacted againſt them, why does a narrow, partial, and diſtruſtful policy, ſtill continue to reſtrain the liberality, and enervate the beneficence, of an enlightened nation?

When Roman Catholics have replied to the accuſations of their adverſaries, and have diſavowed ſuch principles as have been imputed to them in the heat or malice of controverſy, they have been unfortunate enough not to be believed. This affected diſbelief appeared particularly on a late occaſion,

occaſion, when a Catholic clergyman had expreſſed himſelf more freely in a pamphlet*, on the ſubject of toleration, than many Proteſtants thought his profeſſion would have allowed him. Among others, a learned Critic, who would have been more uſefully employed in correcting ancient prejudices, than in propagating them, betrayed a marked unwillingneſs to admit the writer's ſentiments as conſiſtent with his religion. It were to be wiſhed the Critic had formed his idea of Roman Catholics from their writings, rather than from the partial impreſſions of education, and the ſuſpicious authority of controverſy. Such inſinuations of Catholics being diſpoſed from principle to prevaricate, by profeſſing what is only pretended, and denying what is really believed, by them, are highly ungenerous and unjuſt. They take from that perſecuted and degraded people all power of reply; lay them at the mercy of their enemies; and render vain and ineffectual, all the eloquence and all the reaſon of the ableſt apologiſts. The Inquiſition, with all its iniquities, deigns to hear the accuſed. But even the benefit of a hearing, the leaſt mark of judicial favour, is either peremptorily refuſed to Catholics, as was actually done for

* "The rights of Diſſenters from the eſtabliſhed Church, "in relation principally to Engliſh Catholics." By the Rev. Joſeph Berington. 1789.

above a century*, or it is cruelly perverted, by fixing on them the odious imputation of wilful prevarication. This is effectually to realize the fabulous blindneſs of Juſtice, by rendering her blind, not to partiality, but to truth; and ill agrees, it muſt be owned, with the boaſted character we ſo much affect—of a generous and magnanimous people.

To many, this Inquiry will appear rather a ſtudied apology for Catholic doctrines, than an impartial review of their moral and civil tendency. I can only ſay, I deſigned not to be the eulogiſt of Papiſts. My object in writing theſe pages was preciſely this, to diſcover whether the religion of Roman Catholics was ſuch as to merit the odious diſtinction which attends it, the refuſal of an equal toleration with other Diſſenters; in ſhort, the ſevere penalties to which its profeſſors, and particularly its miniſters, are expoſed. If the reſult of my Inquiry has been favourable to Catholics, let it not be aſcribed to my partiality, but to their merit. The documents which I have conſulted for information, have been carefully noticed; and, being more of Proteſtant than Popiſh extraction, will

* The neceſſity of employing a foreign preſs, was long the apology of Catholic Controvertiſts, for the incorrect edition of their works: yet free inquiry, we are told, is one of the bleſſings of Reformation!

will conſequently be leſs ſuſpicious, and leſs exceptionable to the Proteſtant reader. I have ſteered as clear of controverſy as it was poſſible, not only becauſe the ſubject itſelf is unfaſhionable, but becauſe it is not eſſentially connected with the purport of this Inquiry; which is, to compare the Popiſh doctrines, not with the code of revelation, but with the laws of nature and civil ſociety: for, if no oppoſition to theſe be found in the Romiſh ſyſtem, then may its followers claim the rights of men, the benefits of ſociety, and the privileges of citizens.

THE END.

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